

THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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NEW YORK, JULY 25, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS AND THE GEORGIA GIANT! OR, A HARD MAN TO HANDLE.

BY HARRY MOORE.



The giant, club in hand, placed his foot on the form of the insensible "Liberty Boy," and growled out: "Back, er I'll kill ther las' wun uv ye!" Dick, from the window above, made ready to noose the fiend.

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CHAPTER I.

RED HERRICK, THE GEORGIA GIANT.

It was mid-afternoon of a very pleasant day in the latter part of the month of February, of the year 1779.

A woman of perhaps forty years and a beautiful girl of seventeen or eighteen were out in the yard in front of a house which stood in the edge of the timber about five or six miles southwest from Augusta, Georgia. The woman and girl were evidently mother and daughter, and they were feeding a horde of young chickens.

While they were thus engaged a man emerged from the timber at the farther side of the road which ran in front of the house, crossed the road, entered the yard and approached the two, who were so engrossed in their work that they did not notice the coming of the man.

We have said "man," but in truth the fellow looked more like some ferocious wild animal that had forsaken the use of its forefeet and was walking around on its hindlegs. The fellow was a giant in size, being at least seven feet tall, and broad in proportion; he was evidently very muscular and powerful, and for a weapon he carried an enormous knotty club, with which it would seem to be not beyond the bound of possibility for the owner to brain a bull.

The giant was clothed in the skins of wild animals, rudely constructed by himself, without doubt, and this tended to increase the wild animal-like appearance of the man. He wore no hat, his head being covered with a dense, tangled crop of fiery red hair, and his face was half hidden with a rough, tangled beard of the same color.

The giant paused when within ten feet of the woman and the girl, and he stood there, silent and motionless, watching them with leering, vicious eyes. The rude shoes, made out of the skins of wild animals, made it possible for him to walk noiselessly, and he had not been heard by the two, at all.

Presently the girl happened to look up, however, and as her eyes fell upon the giant a scream escaped her lips, startling the woman so greatly that she dropped the pan

of cornmeal dough, spilling the contents and causing a wild scramble among the chickens, old and young.

"Red Herrick!" gasped the girl, turning pale.

"The Tory giant!" from the woman.

The red-headed fiend grinned.

"Yas, et's Red Herrick," he said, in a hoarse, growling voice; "ye don' seem ter be glad ter see me!" with a vicious leer.

"W-what do y-you want?" asked the woman.

"Oh, nothin' in purtickler," was the reply; "ye see, I hev ter make ther roun's uv my frien's, ther rebels, onct in erwhile, so's ter let 'em know I hain't dead; but that I'm still erlive an' 'tendin' ter bizness."

The woman and girl cast sidelong glances to the door of the house, and seeing this the giant fr

"Don' try fur ter make er break fur the warned; "I am mighty sensertive an' tou might take et that ye didn' like me an' that' —an' when I git mad theer hain't no kin do!"

The two well knew this to be the truth. as he was called on account of the color of his beard, was a notorious character in the neighborhood. He was an outlaw Tory, living deep in the hills—just where, no one seemed to know.

The truth of the matter was that the giant was a scoundrel, and had been hunted for his depredations by parties of patriot settlers, after he had committed an atrocity, his home or hiding place having been discovered. No one ever thought of going alone and unarmed into the woods to meet him. He was a fiend; it would have been as much as his life to do so, without doubt, as the giant was fanatical, and would attack at any time and in any place and every crook and turn of the wild.

The scoundrel had robbed and plundered many a home, and had terrorized women and children. He had murdered three or four settlers, so that he was a constant thorn in the flesh, a constant menace to the people, and a curse to the welfare of the community.

"What do you want here?" asked the girl, who

really a brave girl and who had now regained her composure and was cool and calm.

"Whut do I want?" with a leer.

"Yes."

"I wanter know whur yer dad is?"

The woman paled somewhat, and the girl started and a worried look appeared on her face.

"You wish to know where my father is?" she asked, almost mechanically.

"Yas, whur's Sam Hardy? I want ter see 'im."

"You wish to see him?" The girl seemed to be thinking of something, and repeated the question in a mechanical fashion. The truth was that she was wondering why the giant wished to see her father, and asking herself if the fiend was intending to try to murder him.

"Thet's whut I said, hain't et? Yas, I wanter see 'im."

"He isn't at home," said the girl.

"He hain't?"

"No."

"Whur is he, then?"

"I don't know."

"Ye don't know?" The giant eyed the girl suspiciously. "not."

Patrick turned his eyes on the woman.

"Ye know whur yer ole man is?" he remarked. The woman shook her head.

"I don't know," she said.

"D'y ye look an' talk so skairt-like?" grinned the giant. "I'm afeerd that sumbuddy hez be'n tellin' lies."

"Ye has been telling us lies on you," said the giant. "I sawed mother by appearing so suddenly and

"I don't know, hey?"

"I don't know, but yer dad be much skeered, even tho' ye did st put in an appeerence." There was a note of sarcasm in the tone and look.

"I don't know, why I should be afraid."

"I don't know, that's ther way ter tork; but air ye shore to know whur yer dad is?"

"I don't know, I'm afeerd of it."

"I don't know, when he leave ther house?"

"I don't know, in the mornin'."

"I don't know, and he go erway—afoot, on hossback, er in ther

"I don't know, horseback."

"I don't know, which way did he go?"

The girl hesitated a bit and then said:

"Toward the west."

The giant eyed the girl searchingly.

"Air ye shore uv that?" he asked.

"Of course."

"I don't see why he'd go in that direckshun."

"Neither do I; I don't know why he went that way, or where he went; I only know that he did go in that direction."

"I don't berleeve et!"

A scornful look appeared in the girl's eyes.

"You don't have to believe it if you don't want to," she said; "it is the truth, however."

"Come, now, my gal, didn't he go toward ther north instid uv toward ther west?"

"No."

The giant looked puzzled and suspicious.

"I don't see whut he'd be goin' in that d'reckshun fur," he growled; "I think ye air jes' tellin' me that ter throw me orf ther track. Yer afeerd that I'm arter yer dad."

"Why would you be after my father, as you call it?"

"Why, ye ax?" with a leer.

"Yes. Why?"

"Waal, et's simple enuff, I reckon. Yer dad wuz ther leader uv ther gang that wuz out huntin' fur me las' week, an' I swore that I'd hev his life fur doin' uv et!" The giant looked fierce and angry, and his voice resembled the snarl of a wild beast when enraged.

"It isn't true!" the girl cried. "My father was not the leader of the band who went in search of you last week!"

"He wuzn't?" doubtfully.

"No; was he, mother?"

The woman shook her head.

"No, he was not," she replied.

The giant looked from one to the other, doubtfully and undecidedly.

"I wuz tolle that yer dad wuz ther leader uv ther gang," he said.

"Who told you?" asked Mabel Hardy, quickly.

The giant hesitated.

"Et don't matter who tolle me," he said, presently; "sumbuddy tolle me, an' that's enuff."

"But I want to know the name of the man who told you," persisted the girl; "he must be an enemy of my father, for he has told you a deliberate lie!"

The girl's eyes flashed as she said this and her face flushed, causing the red-headed giant to look at her admiringly.

"Say, d'y know that yer purty ez er picter, my gal!" he exclaimed.

The girl drew back and gave the fellow a scornful look, but made no reply.

"Oh, come now, don' git yer back up," grinned the giant; "et ortenter make er gal mad fur ter have er feller tell 'er she's purty. Et hed orter please 'er."

"It doesn't matter whether I'm pretty or not," was the cold reply. "If that is all you have to talk about you might as well go your way."

"Ho, ho, ho! I like ter heer ye tork when ye air mad, my gal!" the giant cried. "Go erhead an' tork sum more! I likes ter look at ye!"

An angry look appeared on the girl's face, while a look of fear appeared on the face of the woman. The girl said nothing in reply, however, and the giant went on:

"Say, I've got er propersishun ter make ter ye, gal: I've took er noshun ter ye, an' while I cum heer fur ther purpuss uv killin' yer dad, I'll ergree not ter hurt 'im ef ye'll ergree ter marry me! Whut d'ye say?"

This was a proposition, sure enough, and the eager look on the face of the red-headed fiend showed that he was in deadly earnest, and it was evident, too, that he did not realize that he was making a proposition at all unusual or extraordinary. To his mind it seemed a very simple affair, and he had stated it in as few words as possible.

A cry of dismay escaped the lips of Mrs. Hardy, a cry of anger from the lips of Mabel.

"What! I agree to marry you, you big brute?" cried the girl. Her anger was so great that it overbalanced her discretion. It would have been wiser to have refrained from saying anything to arouse the red-headed fiend's anger, and to have deceived him by pretending to take the matter under advisement, but the girl did not think, and spoke her thoughts.

"Oh, ho! I'm er big brute, am I?" Red Herrick growled, showing his fang-like teeth.

"Yes, you are!"

"Mabel! Mabel! be careful what you say!" cried her mother, her face pale with fear. "Do not anger the gentleman."

"Ho, ther ole woman knows whut I am, ef ye don', my gal!" the fiend chuckled. "Ye see, she calls me er gen'lem'n."

"Then prove that you are a gentleman by going your way and leaving us alone!" said Mabel, with spirit.

"Ho, ho, ho! So ye wants me ter go erway, do ye?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I'm sorry I kain't 'commerdate ye, my gal," with a leer. "Ennyhow, I wouldn't think uv goin' afore I git an answur frum ye, ter my propersishun."

"You know what my answer is to that."

"Waal, I kin guess at et, frum whut ye said, but I'd ruther ye'd say yes er no right out."

"Very well, then; no!"

"So et's 'no,' is et, my gal?"

"Yes—and I'm not your 'gal,' so stop calling me that."

"Oh, yer mighty techy, et seems ter me!" with a snarl. "Is theer ennythin' else ye'd like fur me ter do, er not ter do?"

"I would like for you to go away about your business, if you have any."

"Oh, ye would, hey?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I'm attendin' ter bizness right now; I'm heer on bizness, I want ye ter know. I'm heer ter kill yer dad onless ye ergrees ter marry me!"

"That I will never agree to do!"

"Then yer dad hez got ter die!"

"But, sir," protested Mrs. Hardy, "my husband was not the leader of the party of men who searched for you last week. As Mabel says, whoever told you that, told a falsehood."

"Waal, et don' matter; ef he wuzn't ther leader he wuz in ther gang, an' that's jes' ez bad."

"I don't think he was in the party, either."

"Oh, yas, he wuz!"

"How do you know?" asked the girl.

"Oh, I know, that's how."

"But you don't know; you are just saying so, without having any knowledge regarding the matter."

"That's all right; he wuz erlong, an' I'm goin' ter kill 'im, an' every rebel whut wuz in ther gang!"

"Maybe you will get killed yourself!" said the girl, spiritedly.

"Oh, I s'pose ye'd be glad ter see me killed!" with a leer.

"Yes, I would! You are a great, big, cowardly, murderous brute, and this locality will never know any peace or security until after you have been killed!"

"Mabel! Mabel!" cried her mother, pleadingly, but the girl's blood was up and she would not stop talking till she had finished what she had to say. The giant was very angry, and he showed his teeth like an angry panther, and there was a fierce light in his eyes.

"Oh, I'm er great, big, cowardly, murd'rous brute, am I?" hissed the giant, his eyes glowing fiercely.

"You are! and if my father was here he would shoot you dead, and end your reign of terror!"

"Oh, he would, would he?"

"Yes."

"Mebby he would an' mebby he wouldn'," with a leer; "I wush he wuz heer!" viciously. "I'd make ye sorry ye torked so sassy ter me, by killin' uv 'im afore yer eyes!"

"As you just said, Red Herrick—maybe you would and maybe you wouldn't."

Just then the sound of hoofbeats came to the ears of the three, and they looked eagerly down the road in the direction from which the sound came. From the sound it seemed that there must be quite a large party of horsemen, and the next moment this was proven to be the case, for about a hundred horsemen came into view around a bend in the road a hundred and fifty yards distant.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the woman, fervently.

"This way!" cried the girl, lifting up her voice till it rang out, loud and clear; "this way, sirs, if you wish to kill or capture the scourge of Georgia! Hasten, and you will have the good fortune of ridding the earth of Red Herrick, the Georgia Giant!"

"Ye she-painter!" hissed the giant; "I'll fix ye fur that! I kain't git er lick at yer dad himse'f ter-day, but I'll hit 'im through his darter! Ye'll cum with me!" and as he spoke the giant leaped forward and seized the girl before she realized what he was about.

Then, throwing the maiden over his shoulder, as if she were a bag of potatoes, the fiend gave utterance to a wild yell of defiance and triumph, and, darting around the house, plunged into the timber and disappeared from view.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIANT CARRIES OFF A GIRL.

The party of horsemen were the famous "Liberty Boys," with Dick Slater, the still more famous scout, spy and fighter, with them, he being their captain.

The "Liberty Boys" were down in Georgia for the purpose of rendering such aid as was possible to the patriot settlers, who were having a hard time of it, the Tories and redcoats robbing and pillaging almost at will.

The youths were now headed for Augusta, but as that town was occupied by the British, it was the intention of the "Liberty Boys" to make a circuit, and go around the place, and then continue on northward and join a force of fifteen hundred patriots, under General Ashe, who, so Dick had received word, was on his way from Charleston to Augusta, with the intention of making an attack on the British of that town.

The youths were riding along, talking and laughing, not thinking of their surroundings, and when they came in sight of the house and saw the man and the two women in the yard, they did not even then think much about the matter save to wonder who the nondescript-like man—or giant, rather—could be. But when they heard the girl's words to the effect that the man was "Red Herrick," their interest was aroused on the instant, for they had heard many stories regarding the Georgia giant, known as Red Herrick. They had heard tales told, depicting him as a veritable fiend, a demon who would hesitate at no deed, no matter how fearful or bloody it might be. They had wondered if they would encounter him, and here he was, right in front of them.

"Forward, boys!" cried Dick, and they urged their horses into a gallop, but they could not stop the giant from acting. They saw the red-headed fiend seize the girl, throw her over his shoulder and dart around the house and disappear from view, and with cries of anger the "Liberty Boys" leaped to the ground.

"Twenty of you boys come with me!" cried Dick; "the rest stay and look after the horses."

The youth and twenty of his companions leaped the fence in front of the house and ran forward to where Mrs. Hardy stood, wringing her hands and weeping as if her heart were broken.

"My daughter!—oh, save my daughter!" the woman cried. "Save my child from that fiend!"

"Have no fear, madam," called out Dick; "we will save your daughter."

And then he dashed onward, accompanied by the twenty "Liberty Boys."

"Scatter, boys," ordered Dick, "and keep your eyes open. We must run the fiend down!"

"We'll do it, Dick!" cried Bob Estabrook.

The youths dashed through the timber at a rapid pace, spreading out fan-shape as they went. They were old hands at this sort of business, and not one among them but was an expert woodsman and could follow a trail equal to any redman of the forest.

Dick kept almost straight on in the direction he had started, and as he went he listened intently in the hope that he might hear the crashing of the giant through the under-brush.

Red Herrick, however, was an expert woodsman himself, and was enabled to run, even loaded down with the girl as he was, without making any noise to speak of. It happened, however, that Dick was on his path, and as the youth was not burdened with anything to carry, and was

The reover a very swift runner, he was rapidly overhauling the fugitive. A mile had been gone over and then Dick suddenly caught a glimpse of the giant.

"Good!" thought the youth; "I think I have him now. I must not let him get out of my sight, however, as I might lose him, after all."

In pursuance of this object—to keep the giant in view—Dick exerted himself to the utmost, and fairly flew over the ground. He gained on the giant rapidly, and soon was close enough so that the fiend could not turn aside without being seen.

"Now I will run him down, I am confident," said Dick to himself, and he settled down to a steady gait that would enable him to overhaul the fugitive before he would go half a mile farther.

Onward dashed the giant, his burden clasped in his arms, his red hair flying, and after him came Dick, gaining slowly but steadily.

Red Herrick half paused once, and, turning his head, looked back. He caught sight of Dick as did the girl also, and while a cry of joy escaped Mabel's lips, a bitter curse escaped the lips of the giant, and he turned and dashed onward with renewed strength and desperation.

"If I thought there was on'y ther wun," the fiend said to himself, "I'd stop an' kill 'im, ez quick ez scat! But theer wuz er big gang uv 'em, an' I 'xpeck that theer's fifty on 'em clus ter han'. No, ther bes' thing I kin do is ter try ter git ter ther cave."

So he kept on running at the best speed of which he was capable, his teeth set, his eyes glaring, his breath coming in gasps.

"You had better let me go!" cried Mabel Hardy.

"I won't do et!"

"You will lose your life if you don't."

"I'll resk et."

"The man is lots closer than he was, and he'll catch you easily in a few minutes, and if you are hampered with me he will have no trouble in killing you."

"I'll show ye; ef he overtakes me I'll use ye fur er shiel', an' he won't dar' try ter hurt me fur feer uv hurtin' ye."

"You fiend!"

"Ho, ho, ho! Red Herrick knows whut he's erbout, mos' all ther time, I'm tellin' ye, my gal!"

"I think that this is the time that you don't know so well as you think you do," was the reply.

"Whut makes ye think so?"

"The fact that there are probably fifty men close upon your heels, and they will surely catch and kill or capture

you unless you let me go, and look out for your own safety."

"Don' ye fret erbout Red Herrick, my gal. I'm goin' ter keep ye pris'ner, an' I'm goin' ter git cl'ar erway frum them cusses, too."

"I don't see how you can expect to do it."

"Ye soon will see!"

Dick kept on gaining, and presently he was near enough to make himself heard and understood.

"Stop!" he called out. "Stop, Red Herrick, if you wish to save your life!"

"Ter blazes with ye!" the giant yelled back. "I'll not stop fur ye, nur er hunderd like ye!"

The youth saw it would do no good to try to get the giant to stop, so made up his mind to warn his "Liberty Boys" that he had sighted the fugitive, and enable them to close in on the fellow. Drawing a pistol he fired it into the air.

"There, the boys will know what that means," he said to himself, "and they will speedily hem Mr. Red Herrick in, and unless he drops the girl and takes to his heels in an attempt to save himself, we will soon have him."

"Whut does ther fool mean by shootin' orf his pistol?" exclaimed the giant. "Does he wanter kill ye, I wunder?"

"He didn't fire at you?"

"He didn't?"

"No."

"Whut did he shoot at, then?"

"He fired in the air—as a signal to his comrades, I suppose."

"Ho! I guess that yer right; but I'll fool 'im—I'll fool 'em all! They won't git Red Herrick—nur they won't git ye, nuther. I hain't lived aroun' in these heer parts ten yeers fur nothin'!"

"They will get you if you persist in trying to carry me away."

"Ye'll see!"

The scoundrel spoke so confidently that Mabel was worried, in spite of the fact that she had a friend in sight and coming closer every moment.

"I wonder if he does know what he is talking about?" she asked herself. "Or is it merely bravado, and will he drop me soon and try to make his escape?"

The way was very rough and uneven now, and the giant seemed to be heading for the side of a mountain which loomed up close ahead.

Dick noted this fact, and he asked himself: "Can the scoundrel have a hiding place on the mountainside? If so, it stands me in hand to get up with him as quickly as possible."

He increased his speed and was not more than one hundred feet behind the fugitive when he started up the side of the mountain.

"Stop!" cried Dick. "It is folly for you to try to get away, for you cannot do it. Stop at once!"

But the giant did not stop. A derisive laugh was the only answer he vouchsafed to Dick, and this made the youth more suspicious than ever.

"He feels confident that he will escape," the youth told himself; "there must be a hiding place near at hand, and alone that he deems very secure, too."

Becoming more and more imbued with this idea, Dick exerted himself to overtake the fellow. The giant was climbing diagonally up the face of the mountain, and when he had progressed perhaps three hundred yards, he suddenly disappeared from sight around a huge boulder which projected from the face of the mountain. Instinctively fearing that the hiding place was near at hand, Dick leaped around the boulder in pursuit, but nowhere could he see the fugitive and his prisoner. The giant and the girl had disappeared from sight.

a An exclamation of vexation escaped Dick's lips.

b "Where has the scoundrel gone?" he cried aloud, and he began looking eagerly around in the hope that he would speedily penetrate the mystery of the disappearance.

y He was soon successful. At the rear of the huge boulder, just behind a cluster of bushes, was the entrance to a cave. The entrance was not more than two feet in height and width, and was pretty effectually concealed from the view of any casual passerby. Dick, however, being in search of something of the kind, easily found it, and he knew his quarry was in the cave. The bad feature of it all, however, was that the girl was still with him.

"Having the girl in there a prisoner gives him the whip-hand of us, I am afraid," thought Dick; "unless we can fool him by some sort of a trick."

f The youth bent down, and, with his face at the entrance, called out:

P "Hello, in there!"

s "Hello, yerse'f!" came back, in surly tones, but well tinged with triumph.

t "Well, will you surrender?"

t "Ho, ho, ho!" came back, in hoarse laughter. "Ye want me ter surrender, d'ye?"

P "Why not?"

f "Waal, theer's lots of reezons w'y I shouldn't surrender."

b "There isn't a single valid reason; we have you holed, and you cannot escape."

I "Oh, kain't I?"

"No."

"Thet's all right; ye jes' keep on thinkin' thet, ef ye wanter."

"It's true, and you know it, Red Herrick. I know this cave as well as you do, and know that there is no other way of getting out of it save by this entrance."

"Oh, ye know thet, do ye?"

"Yes."

"Waal, mebby ye know ez much erbout this heer cave ez I do, but I hev my doubts."

"Bosh! You cannot escape us, so you might as well come out and have done with it."

"Not much, I won't come out!"

"You won't?"

"No; ef ye fellers git me outer heer ye'll hev ter come in and git me."

"Well, we can easily do that."

"Ye think so?"

"I know it."

"Waal, I guess ye'll fin' et harder nur ye think."

"I don't think it will be very difficult."

"Come erlong in an' git me, then!"

"I will as soon as my men get here."

"Oh, yer men hain't got theer yit, hey?"

"No."

"An' yer all by yerse'f?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad ter heer that, an' I'm much erbleeged ter you fur tellin' me."

Dick could not understand what the giant meant by these words, but he was soon to find out. Suddenly the red-headed, fiendish-looking man leaped out of the cave and at him with the snarl of a wild beast!

CHAPTER III.

AT THE CAVE.

"So that's what he meant, eh?" was the thought that flashed through Dick's mind, even as the giant leaped toward him.

The youth was startled by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the fiend, but he was not at all frightened or thrown off his balance by the sudden attack. He was too old a hand and had taken part in too many adventures of all kinds to be taken at a disadvantage.

The giant had his massive, knotty club in his hands, and

when he was near enough to Dick he made a terrible blow at the youth's head. Dick leaped backward, quickly, and the club missed him a foot; the impetus of the blow caused the giant to swing around, however, till the side of his body was toward Dick, and the youth stepped quickly forward and dealt the fellow a terrible blow just back of the ear.

Now, Dick was a very strong youth, was stronger than most men, and he moreover knew how to deliver a blow so as to bring the weight of the body into service, but although he exercised all his strength and skill in this instance, and had delivered a blow that would have floored any other man he had ever seen, he did not succeed in knocking the giant down. The fellow staggered backward against the great boulder, but he was not overbalanced, and with a snarl of rage he again leaped toward Dick.

"I'll kill ye now, cuss ye!" the fiend hissed, his eyes glowing viciously.

The youth had no time to draw and cock a pistol, so was forced to again depend upon his quickness and agility to keep him out of harm's way. He stood still, instead of retreating, and as the giant struck him he leaped toward the fiend instead of from him and the fellow's arms and club went above the youth's head.

Then Dick struck the giant a terrible blow on the chin, another in the stomach, and followed this up by tripping him, and giving him a fierce push backward, which had the effect of upsetting him.

Down went the giant with a crash and a yell which was more of anger and amazement than of pain. He hung onto the club, however, and scrambled to his feet with a show of agility that would hardly have been expected from such an unwieldy creature.

As he gained his feet, however, he found himself looking into the muzzle of a pistol which Dick had quickly drawn and leveled.

"Just hold on, please!" said Dick, calmly but warningly; "I should hate to put a bullet through you, my esteemed friend, Red Herrick, but if you make another attack on me I shall be forced to do so."

A hoarse, inarticulate growl escaped the lips of the giant.

"Ef ye wuz ter shoot that thing orf, et'd be ther death uv ye, young feller!" he growled, glaring fiercely.

"No, it would be the death of you!" Dick spoke calmly and quietly.

"Ye think et'd be ther death uv me, do ye?" with a leer.

"Yes."

"Waal, thet's whur yer makin' er mistake, young feller."

"You think so?"

"Yas; ther single bullet ez'd kill me hain't never be'n run yit."

"You think not?"

"I knows et."

"Oh, no, you don't know anything of the kind. It is foolishness to talk in any such way as that."

"I don't think so."

"I do; why, one bullet, if placed in the right spot, would kill you as dead as fifty would."

The youth, who was watching the giant closely, thought the fellow looked a bit disconcerted. He hesitated, and then said:

"Waal, et might, ef et wuz put in ther right place—but that's ther trubble, ye know. Ye kain't put et inter ther right place."

"Oh, yes, I can."

"Ye kin?"

"Most assuredly."

"Humph! Ye mus' think ye air er good shot with ther pistil."

"I am a dead shot."

"Ye air, hey?"

"Yes. I can hit a shilling at ten paces, nine times out of ten."

"Ye kin?" The giant gasped the words.

"Yes; and if you were to attempt to attack me again I would put a bullet through your eye—and that would finish you, big and strong as you are."

The giant's face paled slightly, but his eyes shone dangerously and viciously. It was evident that he was in a desperate mood and was likely to do almost anything.

Just then Mabel Hardy appeared at the entrance to the cave, and seeing that Dick held the giant at his mercy, seemingly, she quickly leaped forth from the cave and hastened to place herself around behind the youth. Red Herrick uttered a hoarse roar of rage and disappointment when he saw that the girl had escaped from the cave, and he glowered at Dick very angrily indeed.

"I'll hev yer life fur that, ye young dog!" he hissed.

"Bah! stop threatening," said Dick, contemptuously. "Your own life is at my mercy, remember, and as I don't like your looks any too well, anyway, I am likely to pull the trigger and make an end of you."

"Ye won't darst do et," growled the giant; "fur ef ye didn't kill me I'd kill ye!"

"But I would kill you," said Dick, calmly; "when I shoot to kill, that settles it."

"Bah! ye air jes' braggin'."

"No, I am not bragging. I mean it; and now, my red-headed friend, just drop that club!"

"W-whut's thet?"

"I say, drop that club!"

"Drop ther club?"

"Yes."

"Whut fur?"

"Because I tell you to do so."

"Oh, thet's ther why uv et, hey?"

"Yes."

"An' ef I drop ther club ye'll put er bullet through me, hey?"

The youth shook his head.

"No, I won't do that," he said.

"Whut d'ye want me ter drop ther club fur, then?"

"Because I'm afraid you might attempt to do some damage with it, and if you did that I should be forced to kill you—which I don't want to do."

"Oh, ye don'?"

"No."

"Waal, I'm kinder glad ter heer ye say thet!" with a leer.

"Are you going to drop the club or not?"

The youth spoke sharply; he was getting impatient.

"Will ye let me go ef I drop et?"

"I shall make no promises."

"Oh, ye won't make no prommusses, 'hey?'"

"No."

At this instant a voice was heard calling:

"Dick! Oh, Dick! Where are you?"

"Ah, the boys are close at hand!" exclaimed Dick. Then lifting up his voice he cried out: "Here! Up here behind the big boulder!"

The youth's attention had been partially diverted from the giant, and he noticed it and took advantage of the fact. He did not dare attempt to leap forward and strike the youth, but without moving his body he gave the club a quick whirl and hurled it at Dick's head.

The youth ducked just in time to avoid the ugly missile, and at the same time he fired a snapshot at the giant. The scoundrel made a leap backward and to one side, however, and as Dick had fired from a constrained position, Red Herrick was not hit by the bullet. Giving vent to a wild, defiant yell the scoundrel leaped headfirst into the cave entrance and almost instantly disappeared from view.

"The scoundrel has escaped, after all!" exclaimed Dick, in a tone of disappointment.

"Perhaps not, sir," said the girl; "if there is no other way of getting out of the cave you will be able to effect his capture."

"True; but it is possible that there is another way of getting out."

"I hardly think so, sir; he would hardly have come forth and attacked you had there been another way of escaping."

"That seems reasonable," Dick agreed; "well, here are the boys and we'll see what they have to say about the matter."

Bob Estabrook, followed by the other "Liberty Boys," appeared at this moment, and when they saw the girl, exclamations of pleasure escaped their lips.

"So you rescued the young lady, Dick!" exclaimed Bob. "That is good."

"Well, I can't say that I rescued her, Bob, but the giant came out of the cave here and attacked me, and while we were having the encounter the young lady was given the chance to come out, and she availed herself of it."

"Which amounts to the same thing as a rescue," said Bob.

"So I think," said Mabel, earnestly; "and I thank the gentleman most heartily and sincerely. Ugh! how glad I am to be out of the power of that fiend!"

"He seems to be a desperate character," said Dick.

"Oh, he is, indeed!" the girl said. "He is the scourge of these parts."

"He is a Tory, you say, miss?"

"Yes; and a fiend in the bargain. He keeps the patriots of this vicinity in constant fear of their lives, and he steals and robs even Tory families, though this happens only infrequently."

"Has he ever committed murders?"

"Yes, several of them."

"Well, it seems to me that it would be a good plan to hunt the scoundrel down and put an end to his career," said Dick.

"It has been attempted two or three times," the girl explained.

"And has failed each time, eh?"

"Yes."

"What was the trouble?"

"They could not find him."

"Do you know whether or not they discovered this cave?"

"No."

"Doubtless he has a number of hiding places in the vicinity, Dick," suggested Bob.

"That is more than likely, Bob."

"But can we not capture him now, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison. "He's in this cave, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then I should think that we would be able to get our hands on him."

"If there is but the one way of entering and leaving the cave, we may be able to do so."

"Ah! you think there may be more than one way?"

"It is possible; indeed, I think it probable, as he would hardly have re-entered the cave if he knew it to be a trap from which there was no way of escaping."

"That's so."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to enter the cave at once, Dick?" asked Bob. "By so doing we might be able to catch the scoundrel before he could get away."

The youth hesitated.

"I don't know whether it will be wise to enter the cave or not, Bob," he said; "that red-headed giant is a hard man to handle, and as he knows the ground and we do not, he might succeed in killing two or three of you boys—and that is something I wouldn't have happen for a dozen such scoundrels."

"Oh, we'll risk it, Dick," said Bob; "we aren't afraid of the fellow."

"Oh, I know you are not afraid, Bob," with a smile; "but that doesn't alter the fact that the giant is dangerous, and might kill some of you boys."

"Oh, he is a cruel-hearted, desperate fiend!" the girl exclaimed. "If you enter the cave you should do so in force, and have a torch so as to see him and not give him a chance to attack you in the darkness. I have no doubt that he can see in the dark, like a cat."

"That is a good suggestion," said Dick; "fix a torch and light it, boys, and then go into the cave."

The youths obeyed and ten minutes later they had a burning torch. Ten of the youths then entered the cave, while the rest remained at the entrance ready to rush in if the giant was found and showed fight.

Scarcely had the youths entered the cave before a shout was heard, and looking up the mountainside the youths on the outside saw a man standing on a large boulder three hundred yards distant. There was no mistaking the man. He was a giant in size, had red hair and beard, wore no head covering, was dressed in skins of wild animals, and while he shook one clenched fist at the youths, in the other hand was brandished a huge club.

It was Red Herrick, the Georgia Giant.

CHAPTER IV.

"A HARD MAN TO HANDLE."

"That's the scoundrel, sure enough!"
"It's Red Herrick!"

"He has escaped from the cave!"

"There is another way of getting out!"

"He's a saucy scoundrel!"

Such were a few of the exclamations to which the youths gave utterance, and all stood staring at the figure on the boulder.

"Ho, ho, ho!" came down in the hoarse, mocking tones of the giant. "Ye thort ye'd ketch Red Herrick, didn' ye? Waal, I wanter tell ye, young fellers, thet er thousan' sech chaps ez ye couldn' do thet, let er lone er hundred er so!"

"You think so?" called out Dick, in response to this boast.

"I know et—ho, ho, ho!"

"Call the boys back out of the cave, Mark," said Dick; and then lifting his voice he called out:

"As you have chosen to defy us, Red Herrick, I will tell you something, and that is this: That we are going to stay right here in this vicinity and run you to earth; do you hear?"

"Oh, yas, I heer all right."

"Very well; you have been warned. Now we are going to set in on your trail and we are going to capture you and turn you over to a committee of the men of this vicinity, to do with as they see fit!"

"And they'll see fit to hang you, you red-headed scoundrel!" cried Bob Estabrook.

"Oh, ye think they will, hey?" in a tone of derision.

"Yes."

"All right; but ye mus' remember thet theer mus' allers be ketchin' afore theer is enny hangin'—ho, ho, ho!"

"No doubt you feel secure," called out Dick, "but you will find that when you get 'The Liberty Boys of '76' on your trail you are getting something serious to look out for!"

"Air ye fellers ther 'Liberty Boys'?" the giant asked.

"That's what we are," replied Bob Estabrook; "and we'll make you 'ho, ho, ho!' on the other side of your mouth before very long, you red-headed elephant!"

"Say, don' ye go fur ter callin' uv me er red-headed elerfunt!" cried the giant, shaking his club menacingly.

"You don't like it, eh?"

"No, I don', an' ef I wuz down theer I'd knock ther head cl'ar off'n ye with this heer club!"

"Well, come right down and do it," invited Bob; "there's nothing to hinder. Come right along!"

"I'll come ha'fway down ef ye'll come ha'fway up," was the unexpected reply.

"All right, I'll do it!" cried Bob, promptly, and he started up the mountainside at a brisk gait.

The giant watched the youth toiling up the side of the mountain for a few moments and then called out:

"Ye needn' come, young feller."

Bob paused and looked up at the man.

"Why not?" he asked, in a disappointed tone.

"Becos I hain't comin' down theer."

"You are not?"

"No."

"But you said you would."

"I know that."

"Well, didn't you mean it?"

"No; I jes' wanted ter see whether ye hed enny sand er not."

"Oh, that was it, eh?"

"Yas."

"Well, I guess your curiosity is satisfied now, isn't it, you red-headed elephant?"

"See heer!" roared the giant, fairly hopping up and down in his anger; "jes' ye keep on callin' me that an' I'll come down theer an' smash ye, that's what I'll do!"

"I dare you to try it, you red-headed elephant!" cried Bob, and he again began making his way up the side of the mountain.

The "Liberty Boys" and Mabel Hardy were highly amused, and laughed heartily.

"Bob's eager for a go at that fellow," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes, and the giant would have his hands full if he was to come down there to meet Bob," said Sam Sanderson.

"He won't come," said Dick; "he isn't quite a fool, for all he looks it. He would be afraid that we would rush up and capture him."

This proved to be the case; at any rate the giant made no move toward coming down to meet Bob. He simply called out:

"Thet's all right, young feller. I'll see ye erg'in. I'll try ter meet ye some time when theer hain't so menny uv yer frien's aroun', an' then I'll kill ye, that's what I'll do!"

"None of my friends will interfere with you in any way," called out Bob; "come down here and smash me!"

"I'll see ye some other time," was the reply, and then the giant leaped down off the boulder and disappeared amid some trees growing near.

"Go it, you coward!" called out Bob. "Go it, but remember that the 'Liberty Boys' are on your track!"

There was no reply, and Bob made his way back down to where his comrades were.

"He didn't care about meeting you, after all, Bob," said Sam Sanderson.

"No, he is one of those fellows who think that they can scare people by their size. When he saw I was ready for him he didn't want to have anything to do with me."

"Well, let us return to the home of this young lady," said Dick; "her mother will be anxious to know whether or not we rescued her daughter."

"So she will," agreed Bob.

"By the way, what is your name, miss?" asked Dick as the party, with himself and the girl in the lead, started down the mountainside.

"Mabel Hardy, sir."

"How are you feeling, Miss Mabel?" the youth asked. "Did the rough handling to which you were subjected while the giant was carrying you at such speed over the rough ground and through the timber, cause you much pain or inconvenience?"

"No, sir; I feel somewhat stiff, and there are a number of abrasures of the skin, but I am not injured to speak of, at all."

"I am glad to know that."

The girl turned her eyes on Dick, earnestly and inquiringly.

"Are you really Dick Slater, of whom I have heard so much, and are these really the 'Liberty Boys'?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Mabel."

"But I thought you were away up in the North."

"That is where we have done most of our work, but we are in the South, now, and judging by what we have seen it is a good thing we are here."

"Oh, I hope you will be able to capture or kill Red Herrick, Mr. Slater. Not that I am cruel-hearted or blood-thirsty, but he is a demon, a fiend. He is the terror, the scourge of this region, and the people live in constant dread."

"It is time he was looked after," said Dick.

"He came to our house and asked for father," the girl went on; "he said that father was the leader of a party that went in search of him last week, and he was going to kill him. And I fear he will do it, too, if he is left free to work his will."

"Have no fears, Miss Mabel. We are on our way up into South Carolina, but are in no hurry and we will stay in this part of the country long enough to put an end to this fiend."

"Oh, I am so glad!"

The party walked at a good gait, and half an hour later arrived at the home of Mabel Hardy. The girl's mother was delighted to see her daughter back home again, alive

and well, and she seized the girl in her arms and hugged and kissed her.

"Oh, Mabel! I was so afraid I would never see you again!" the woman exclaimed.

"You might not have done so, mother, had it not been for these gentlemen," said Mabel, indicating Dick and his comrades.

"We thank you, gentlemen, with all our heart!" the woman cried, earnestly. "And I hope that we may sometime be enabled to do something to in a measure repay you for what you have done for us."

"Don't say a word, Mrs. Hardy," said Dick, smiling; "we are only too glad to have been able to render you aid in your time of need. We are patriot soldiers, and as that red-headed giant is a Tory we were only doing our duty in trying to run him to earth."

"And, oh, mother!" exclaimed the girl, "these are 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' of whom we have heard so much, and they are going to stay in this part of the country and capture Red Herrick."

The woman's face lighted up.

"I am glad to hear that!" she exclaimed. "If you will do that you will probably save my husband's life, for that fiend came here this afternoon to kill Mr. Hardy."

"So your daughter said," remarked Dick; "well, we are going to stay here and make an attempt to capture or kill Red Herrick; and I do not for a moment doubt that we will be successful."

"I hope and pray that you may be successful! It will be a blessing to this region if you do succeed, for Red Herrick is a terror, a scourge and a constant menace to the patriots, and even the Tories do not like him, for he sometimes robs them as well as the patriots."

"Well, we will stay here and make it our business to catch Red Herrick," said Dick; "and it will be strange if we cannot do so. We have done more difficult things than that, I am sure."

"We'll catch him, kill him or drive him clear out of the country!" said Bob Estabrook, confidently.

"Oh, I hope you will succeed!" said Mabel.

"By the way," said Dick; "if we are to remain in this vicinity, and make an attempt to capture the giant, we will have to go into camp somewhere, and what will be the chance for us to stay here, Mrs. Hardy?"

"Oh, we shall be only too glad to have you stay!" cried the woman. "You will be a protection to us and to my husband, and that fiend will not have such a good chance to put his threat of killing Mr. Hardy into execution."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hardy. We shall be very glad to stay

here, and we will pay you for such provisions as you may be able to spare us."

"We have the cellar half full of potatoes and cabbage and half a dozen barrels of meat," the woman exclaimed "and you are welcome to all that you want for nothin' Goodness, do you think we could accept pay from you for food after what you have just done for us in rescuing Mabel from Red Herrick's hands?"

"We are only too glad that we can do a little somethin' in the way of repaying you for what you have done, Mrs. Slater," said Mabel.

"We do not wish to be repaid for what we have done for Miss Mabel," said Dick, "but we will accept the provision in the same spirit in which they are offered. That will be nice for us, and we will make our encampment here and get ready for our campaign against Red Herrick."

"There is plenty of room in the house for all of you, said Mrs. Hardy; "you see, we have a large house. There are five large rooms upstairs and the sitting-room downstairs, which you may have for sleeping-rooms."

"That will be splendid," said Dick; "and as it is a bit sharp these nights we will accept of your hospitality and bunk in the house."

The youth then told the "Liberty Boys" what was to be done, and they proceeded to fix for a stop of some length. They unbridled and unsaddled their horses and tied them in the edge of the timber and then gathered in front of the house to discuss the situation.

While they were thus engaged, and Mrs. Hardy and Mabel were in the kitchen, bustling around getting ready to cook supper for one hundred hungry "Liberty Boys," the sound of hoofbeats was heard, and the next moment a horseman came in sight, coming from the north.

"There comes father, now!" exclaimed Mabel, who happened to come to the door. "But I wonder what is the matter with his left arm? It is hanging at his side. Perhaps the horse threw him and broke his arm!"

The girl and her mother went running out to the fence, Dick and the "Liberty Boys" following.

It was seen that the man was very pale, and it was with difficulty that he got off the horse.

"What is the matter, Sam?" asked Mrs. Hardy. "Are you much hurt?"

"My arm is broken, I think," was the reply, the tone showing that the man was suffering considerable pain.

"Your arm broken? How did it happen?"

"That fiend, Red Herrick did it!"

"When? How?" cried the woman, while the "Liberty Boys" looked at one another in an expressive manner.

"Just now; up the road a little ways," was the reply.

"Just now? Up the road a little ways?"

"Yes; I was riding along, not thinking of danger, when ~~t~~ ^{fa} sudden the scoundrel leaped out in the road and hurled big club at my head. I dodged down and threw up my ~~rm~~, and the club struck my arm, breaking it, I am sure. ~~t~~ nearly knocked me off the horse, but I managed to retain ~~iy~~ seat and the animal was frightened and dashed onward, leaving the fiend behind. It was all done so quickly that I didn't have time to draw a pistol and fire upon him."

"Well, thank God you were not killed, Sam!" said the ~~oman~~. "Red Herrick's course is about run, for these young gentlemen are 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' and they're going to stay here until they have captured or killed Red Herrick."

"The 'Liberty Boys,' you say!" exclaimed Mr. Hardy, in amazement.

"Yes; and they have already placed us under great obligations to them, for they only a little while ago saved Mabel from Red Herrick, he having seized her and carried her away a prisoner."

"You don't mean to tell me that the scoundrel dared do that!" exclaimed the man.

"Yes, but Mr. Slater and his 'Liberty Boys' rescued her; and now, come in the house and let us see what we can do for your injured arm, Sam."

At this instant there came a loud shout, and looking up the road in the direction from which Mr. Hardy had come, all saw a well-known, giant form standing erect on a tall stump by the roadside. The man was a quarter of a mile away, but it was impossible to mistake him. It was Red Herrick, and he brandished his club in the air, gave utterance to a wild yell of defiance, and leaping down from the stump, disappeared from sight.

"I believe that is the most impudent scoundrel that ever I saw!" said Mark Morrison.

"He is going to be a very hard man to handle," said Dick.

"But we'll handle him, all right," said Bob Estabrook, confidently; "the Georgia Giant has about run his course!"

CHAPTER V.

THE GIANT VISITS AUGUSTA.

The giant, Red Herrick, was indeed a dangerous man. He had been so successful in his work of plundering, rob-

bing and even murdering that he was bold and reckless. He was pretty shrewd, too, in his way, and something told him that in this band of youths who called themselves "The Liberty Boys of '76" he would find some foes not to be despised.

He had followed the "Liberty Boys" and Mabel Hard at a safe distance, as they returned to the girl's home from the mountain, and when he saw them reach the house he made a detour and approached the road at a point a third of a mile distant.

He had not been there so very long before he heard the sound of hoofbeats, and looking up the road he saw a horseman approaching. One swift, sharp look and he drew back, and a fiendish light appeared in his eyes.

"It's Sam Hardy!" he muttered, gripping his club and grinning fiendishly. "Thet's good; ther gal got erway frum me, but I'll git even with 'er by knockin' ther brains outer her dad's head!"

It was as Mr. Hardy had said. When the horseman came opposite where the giant was concealed he leaped out and hurled his club at the horseman's head. The intended victim shielded himself, however, by ducking his head and throwing up his arm, and the horse becoming frightened and dashing away, he was saved.

The failure to kill Mr. Hardy was a great disappointment to Red Herrick, but he glared after the man and muttered that he would kill him next time. Then he walked down the road a ways and climbed up on top of a high stump, from which point of vantage he could see the party at the house.

As we have seen, he finally gave utterance to a couple of yells of defiance, and, leaping to the ground, disappeared in the timber.

This would seem to be a rather reckless thing to do, but the fact was that Red Herrick had a dozen hiding places in that vicinity and felt that he could easily reach one of them in safety before he could be overtaken if the "Liberty Boys" gave chase.

And such proved to be the case. A score of the youths did make an attempt to follow the giant, but failed to find him, and after an hour of tramping around through the timber, made their way back to the house and reported their non-success.

"That is all right, boys," said Dick; "I did not expect you would succeed, for I knew he would not have shown himself had he not been certain of his ability to elude pursuit; but we will soon be after him in a way that will make him wish he had not got us aroused. We will make a business of it and will be systematic, and will soon have him

chased out of his hiding place, and once we get him away from there we will have him."

The giant, who had taken refuge in one of his numerous hiding places, waited till he was sure the youths had given up the search, and then he came forth and started up the road in the direction of Augusta.

"Et's an hour till sundown, an' ha'f an hour longer till dark," the giant muttered; "an' I orter mighty nigh git ter 'Gusta 'fore dark. I'll walk ez peart ez posseble, ennyhow, an' see ef I kin git theer by can'le-lightin' time."

He did succeed in doing so, and when the sentinel challenged him he said: "I'm Red Herrick, an' I've got some important informashun fur ther commandant."

"Oh, it's you, is it, Red?" asked the sentinel.

"Yas."

"All right; pass along. By the way, how are things down in your part of the country?"

"Perty lively," was the reply.

"You've been making it lively for the rebels, I take it, old man, hey?"

"Yas, I have, fur er fack!" was the reply.

"That's the way to do."

"Ye bet et is!"

Red Herrick passed onward and was soon in the town. He had evidently been in the place before, for he walked along without hesitation, and presently stopped in front of what was evidently a combined tavern and barroom.

The giant entered the tavern and was greeted familiarly by the man behind the bar, while numerous loungers nodded familiarly.

"Hello, Red! What'll ye have?" asked the bartender. "Et's my treat, seein's how ye hain't be'n aroun' fur er long time."

"Giv' me whisky, Joe," was the reply, and the bartender set out a bottle and glass and the giant took a drink that was in accordance with his size.

"Perty good stuff, Joe," he said, smacking his lips.

"Et sartinly is, Red; but whut ye doin' up heer?"

"Come up ter see ther commandant, Joe."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas. Whur'll I fin' 'im?"

"Upstairs in ther front room."

"Shall I go right up?"

"No, ye'd better wait till I call ther orderly; then he'll go up and tell ther general ye wanter see 'im."

"All right."

The bartender summoned an orderly, who hastened back upstairs. He was gone but a few minutes and then came back and said to Red Herrick:

"Come with me. The general will see you at once."

Red Herrick followed the orderly upstairs and was ushered into the presence of the British officer who was in command of the force at Augusta.

"Well, my man, what can I do for you?" asked the commandant.

"Theer hain't ennythin' in purtickler thet ye kin do fur me, gineral," was the reply.

"There isn't?" in a tone of surprise. Usually the settlers and residents came to him to ask favors.

"No; I've come ter do sumthin' fur ye."

"Ah, you have?"

"Yas."

"What are you going to do for me?"

"I'll tell ye in er minnet. Furst I wanter ax ye er question."

"Go ahead."

"Hev ye ever heerd tell uv 'Ther Liberty Boys of '76'?"

The commandant started and looked at the giant sharply and searchingly.

"Yes, I have heard of the 'Liberty Boys,'" he replied.

"They air er ban' uv rebels, hain't they?"

"Yas."

"Whur do they hol' forth mostly?"

"In the North."

"In ther North, hey?"

"Yas."

"An' hain't they never be'n knowed ter be down heer in ther South?"

"No."

"Allers be'n up North, hev they?"

"Yas."

"They're purty notorious sort uv fellers, hain't they?"

"They are famous, yes."

"On account uv theer fightin' erbilities ergin'st ther king's sojers, hey?"

"Yas."

"An' I s'pose et would give ye er enny British orsifer er feelin' uv satersfackshun ef ye wuz ter l'arn thet theer wuz er chanst ter hit theer 'Liberty Boys' er lick thet they wouldn't furgit in er hurry?"

"It certainly would afford me or any other British officer a great deal of satisfaction to know that there was a chance to strike the 'Liberty Boys' a strong blow."

"Thet's whut I thort."

"You thought right; but, now, what is all this preamble leading to? What do you wish to say to me? What do you wish to do for me?"

"I want ter giv' ye ther chance that I hev jes' spoke erbout."

The commandant looked surprised and puzzled.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Whut I say. I wanter giv' ye er chance ter hit ther 'Liberty Boys' er lick that they won't furgit in er hurry."

"I can't understand what you mean. How can you give me a chance to strike the 'Liberty Boys' a blow? They are hundreds of miles from here."

Red Herrick shook his head and grinned.

"Oh, no, they hain't," he said.

The commandant stared in wonder.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Do you know anything about the 'Liberty Boys'?"

"I reckon I do!" with a hideous leer.

"Where are they?"

"Ye said er minnet ergo that ther 'Liberty Boys' air hunderds uv miles frum heer, but ye wuz mistook, fur they hain't even one hundred miles erway."

The commandant began to look excited and highly interested.

"You have seen the 'Liberty Boys'?" he asked.

The giant nodded.

"I hev," he said.

"Where did you see them?"

"Erbout five miles frum heer."

"What!" the commandant leaped to his feet in his excitement. "You don't mean to say that you saw the 'Liberty Boys' within five miles of Augusta?"

"Yas, I sartinly mean ter say that very thing."

"When did you see them?"

"This ev'nin'."

"This evening?" eagerly.

"Yas."

"In which direction?"

"Southwest frum heer."

"Southwest?" There was doubt in the commandant's tone.

"Yas."

"But there must be some mistake."

"Whut makes ye think so?"

"The 'Liberty Boys' would come from the northeast instead of the southwest."

"I kain't he'p that," said Red Herrick; "I hev seen er gang uv young fellers whut calls themselves 'Ther Liberty Boys uv '76,' an' they wuz southwest frum 'Gusta."

The commandant was silent a few moments, pondering.

"It is very strange," he remarked, presently; "I don't see what they can be doing over in Georgia. I would not

have been so surprised if you had said you saw them in opposite direction."

"Waal, they're theer, an' I think they air ther 'Liberty Boys,' too, fur they act an' look like fellers whut hev lots uv experience in fightin'."

"They do, eh?"

"Yas."

The commandant looked at the red-headed giant shrewly and curiously.

"Have you had some trouble with them?" he asked. The giant nodded.

"Yas, I hed er leetle trubble with 'em," he said; "the giv' me quite er chase uv et this arternoon, an' they he declared theer purpuss uv stayin' whur they air till the hev captered er killed me."

"Oh, ho! that's it, is it?"

"Yas."

"And so, not wishing to be treated in that fashion, you have come to me to get me to go after the 'Liberty Boys' and thus put them off your trail, eh?"

The giant sniffed contemptuously.

"No, thet hain't et at all," he asserted; "I hain't erfaid uv ther 'Liberty Boys.' I kin take keer uv myse'f, but I thort thet mebby ye'd like ter git er chanst at 'em, an' so I come in heer ter tell ye erbout et. Ez fur ez I'm consarned ye needn' bother erbout et ertall; Red Herrick kin take keer uv himse'f, all right."

The commandant eyed the giant with interest.

"So you are Red Herrick, the Georgia Giant, eh?" he remarked.

"Yas, thet's who I am."

"I suspected it from the first—indeed, was sure of it. I have heard about you, frequently."

"Waal, I guess ye allers heerd that I wuz er loyal king's man," with a grin.

"Yes, I have understood that you were loyal."

"Ye bet I am, an' ther rebels out in my part uv the country will tell ye so, ef ye'll ax 'em."

The commandant was silent for a few minutes and then he looked at Red Herrick, searchingly, and asked:

"Why, do you suppose, are the 'Liberty Boys' in this part of the country?"

The giant shook his head.

"Ye kain't prove et by me," he replied; "I know they're heer, an' thet's all I do know. Why they're heer is too much fur me ter answur."

Before the commandant could say more, the orderly appeared at the door and said:

"A messenger has just arrived from the northwest, and says he has important news for you, sir."

"Show him in," was the command.

The orderly hastened away and the commandant turned to Red Herrick and said:

"Just remain here; I will have something more to say to you as soon as I am through with the messenger."

A few moments later the orderly ushered a dusty, tired-looking man into the room, announcing him as the messenger.

"Be seated," said the commandant.

The man took a seat, and as he did so he eyed the fierce-looking, red-headed giant with wonder and interest.

"What is your name?" asked the commandant.

"Wallace Harper, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"From fifty miles northeast of here, up in the Saluda River country."

"You are a loyal king's man, Mr. Harper?"

"Yes, sir. That is the reason I am here."

"Ah, indeed? The orderly said you had important information for me."

"So I have, sir."

"What is it?"

"A strong rebel force is advancing upon Augusta with the intention of making an attack."

The commandant started.

"Is that true?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, indeed."

"You know it to be?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see this rebel force yourself?"

"Yes."

"How strong a force is it? About how many men, I mean?"

"There must be at least fifteen hundred."

"So many as that?"

"Yes."

"Where are they from?"

"From Charleston."

"Who is their commander?"

"General Ashe."

The commandant nodded.

"I've heard of him," he said; "and how far is this force from here?"

"About two days' march, I should judge."

"Well, that gives us time to prepare to receive the enemy," grimly.

"Yes, sir; that is the reason I hastened here with the

news—so as to give you time to get ready to greet the as they should be greeted."

"You have done well, Mr. Harper, and I thank yo I am glad that there are some loyal king's men still le in the Carolinas."

"Oh, there are a good many, sir."

"I am glad of that. Have you had supper?"

"No, sir."

"Then go downstairs and tell the orderly to show yo the way to the dining-room."

"Very well, sir, and thank you."

"When you have eaten, come back here, Mr. Harper; will wish to ask you some more questions which at presen do not occur to me."

"I will come, sir."

Then the messenger withdrew and the commandan turned to Red Herrick, and, with a nod and a smile, said

"Now I know why the 'Liberty Boys' are in this par of the country."

"You do?" remarked the giant, who was not the bright est fellow in the world.

"Yes."

"Why air they heer, then?"

"For the purpose of co-operating with this rebel force that is coming. To aid in the attack on Augusta."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRITISH COMMANDER HEARS MUCH NEWS.

The giant scratched his head.

"I shouldn't wonder ef ye wuz right," he said.

"I know I am."

"But I'm like ye wuz erwhile ergo."

"How is that?"

"I kain't unnerstan' how et happens that ther 'Liberty Boys' air comin' frum ther southwest instid uv from ther northeast."

"That is a mystery, but it does not signify. The main thing is that the 'Liberty Boys' are near at hand where we can get a chance to strike them a blow."

"Yes, that's ther main thing."

"And as it will be two days before the rebel force that is coming will get here, that will give us ample time to go out and strike the blow."

"So et will."

"Will you act as guide for a party if I send one to attack the 'Liberty Boys,' Red Herrick?"

"I sartinly will!" was the prompt reply.

"Very good; I will make up a party and send it this very night."

"Thet's er good skeem; ther quicker ther better, fur they on't be 'xpecktin' nothin' uv ther kin'."

"True. Well, I will give the order for the party to be a-hade up at once."

The commandant summoned the orderly and told him to send Captain Jones to the room.

The orderly bowed and withdrew, and ten minutes later British captain appeared.

"Ah, Captain Jones," said the commandant, "I am sorry to disturb you, but I have some work to be done, and I have selected you to do it."

"What is the work?" asked the captain, rather ungraciously, for he had been summoned from a game of cards, where he had been losing considerable gold, and wished to get back and recover the lost money. He looked with considerable curiosity at the nondescript being, Red Herrick, as he spoke.

"This man is Red Herrick, Captain Jones," said the commandant, ignoring the question; "perhaps you have heard of him?"

The officer nodded and gave the giant a searching look.

"Yes, I have heard of him," he said, curtly, while Red Herrick grinned in a self-complacent manner, and said:

"Mos' everybody in these heer parts hez heerd uv me, I reckon."

"Red Herrick brings me some important news, captain," went on the commandant.

"Yes?" without much show of interest. The officer's mind was still on the gaming table.

"Yes; he tells me that he has met the 'Liberty Boys,' of whom we have many times heard, and that they are within five miles of Augusta at this very moment!"

The captain started, and a look of surprise and interest appeared on his face.

"You don't mean it?" he cried.

"Yes, I mean it; and that is why I have sent for you."

"Yes!" eagerly.

"I want you to take a party of men and go and strike the 'Liberty Boys' a severe blow."

"Good! I'll do it! I have always wished for a chance at those young scoundrels, and many a time I have wished they were operating in the South instead of in the North, so I could do so."

"Well, your wish is now to be gratified; that is the woe I want you to do."

"I'll do it, you may be sure!"

"How many men do you think you will need, captain?"

"As many as they have; no more."

"How many is that, Red Herrick?" asked the commandant.

"Erbout er hunderd, I sh'd say."

"Then I'll take a hundred men."

"I'll leave that to you, captain; take as many as you like, and be careful not to let the 'Liberty Boys' get the better of you."

"I'll see to it that they don't do so."

"And you will start soon?"

"At the earliest possible moment."

"Good! I wish you success, captain."

"Well, I'll succeed, if such a thing is possible, and I think it is."

"Oh, yes! Well, Red Herrick will act as guide, to lead you to the place where the 'Liberty Boys' are."

"Very well; and now, if you have no further instructions, I will be off."

"That is all the instructions I have to give, captain."

"Very well; I'm off. Come, Red Herrick," and with a bow the officer hastened out of the room, followed by the giant.

"You may stay here in the barroom till I call for you," said Captain Jones, and this just suited the giant, who grunted out:

"All right; I'll be heer when ye wants me."

Red Herrick went straight to the bar and called for whiskey, while the captain left the tavern and made his way to where his own company of soldiers was quartered.

"Well, boys, we have some work to do," he called out; "get ready to march at once!"

"Where are we going, captain?" asked one of the men, as they leaped up and began making preparations for the march.

"Out in the country a ways, boys."

"Out in the country, eh?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"We are going out there to get a chance at 'The Liberty Boys of '76'! You've all heard of them, I guess."

"The 'Liberty Boys'!"

"Yes, we've heard of them!"

"And we are to have a chance at them?"

"Do you really mean it, captain?"

"Certainly I mean it; so hurry and get ready. If we

can take the 'Liberty Boys' by surprise and give them a good thrashing, it will be a big feather in our caps."

"I guess there isn't any doubt about that. But what are the 'Liberty Boys' doing down in this part of the country? They have done most of their work in the North, you know."

"I know they have, and I don't know why they are down here; but the commandant has reliable information to the effect that they are in this vicinity, and he has given me the job of going after them and giving them a blow."

"Well, that is good luck for you, anyway, and I hope we will find the 'Liberty Boys.'"

It did not take the soldiers long to get ready, and they marched around in front of the tavern that was used as headquarters. The news that something of importance was on the tapis had gone around, and quite a crowd was present, and many were the remarks indulged in. It had leaked out in some manner that the soldiers were going into the country for the purpose of getting a chance at a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76," and the interest ran high.

"Where are ther 'Liberty Boys,' Red?" asked the bartender, who had followed Red Herrick to the door of the tavern as he was leaving, he having been called to by the captain.

"They're down ter Sam Hardy's place—ye know wher that is, Joe," was the reply.

"Oh, yes, I know where et is. So they're thar, are they?"

"Yas."

A muttered curse escaped the lips of the captain, and he gave a quick glance around at the faces of the men in the crowd surrounding his men.

"The idiot! To blurt out our destination in that manner!" the captain muttered. "But no matter, I don't suppose the 'Liberty Boys' have any friends in this crowd."

Then he called to Red Herrick.

"Hurry up, Red," he said, "we must be moving."

"All right," was the giant's reply; "jes' foller me an' I'll take ye ter whur ther 'Liberty Boys' air."

Then he took the lead and struck out at a goodly pace, the captain being close at his heels, while behind the officer came the soldiers.

Even before the company of redcoats started away, a boy of about sixteen years had left the crowd in front of the tavern, and was hastening down the street. He waited till he was out of sight of the crowd and then he broke into a run and ran as fast as he could. A few minutes later he turned into the yard of a house standing well back from the street and entered the house in haste.

A man, a woman and two children—a boy of ten and a girl of six—sat in front of the big fireplace, and they looked up in some surprise as the boy entered.

"Ah, is it you, Sam?" remarked the man, and then as he noted the eager, excited look of the boy, he asked:

"What is it? What is the matter?"

"I've just heard some news, father!" the boy replied.

"What is the news?" All four of the inmates of the room looked at the boy with interest and curiosity as they awaited his reply.

"Captain Jones and his company of one hundred soldiers have just started out into the country and they are going to Uncle Sam Hardy's house!"

Mrs. Miller—for that was the people's name—leaped up and uttered an exclamation.

"What are they going there for, Sam?" she cried. "Why are they going to brother Sam's house?"

"I don't think the British intend to hurt any of Uncle Sam's folks, mother," the boy hastened to say.

"Why are they going there, then?"

"There are some patriot soldiers out there and they are going there for the purpose of attacking the patriots."

"Some patriot soldiers at Uncle Sam's?" exclaimed the other boy, eagerly.

"Yes, Tom."

"I wonder who they can be?" remarked Mr. Miller, reflectively. "Likely some of Pickens' men."

Sam Miller shook his head.

"No, they are not any of Pickens' men," he said.

"Who are they, then, I wonder?"

"They are 'The Liberty Boys of '76'!"

"What's that you say—the 'Liberty Boys,' Sam?" cried the man in amazement.

"Yes, father."

"But they are Northern men. I did not know they were in the South."

"They are, though; at any rate, that is what a man told the British, a man who had just come from Uncle Sam's house, and who said he saw them and heard them say they were the 'Liberty Boys'."

"Who was the man, did you learn, Sam?"

"Yes; it was Red Herrick."

"Red Herrick!"

"Yes."

"That terror!—the scourge of the country! So he brought the news to the British, did he?"

"Yes; and he is going to guide them out to Uncle Sam's."

"The scoundrel! He is a fiend, my boy!"

"So he is, father; but why can I not go and warn the 'Liberty Boys' that they are to be attacked?"

The man started, and a little cry of eagerness escaped the lips of the woman.

"Could you get there in time, do you think?" Mr. Miller asked.

"I could by going on horseback."

"Are you sure?"

"Pretty sure, father. I will have to go the roundabout road, but they are afoot and cannot go half so fast as I will be able to go."

"How long have they been gone?"

"They have just started."

"Then you ought to be able to get to your uncle's ahead of them."

"I am sure that I can, father."

"If he can get safely out of Augusta," said Mrs. Miller; "that will be the hardest part of it all."

"Oh, I know a way to get out without being seen by the sentinels," said Sam; "I haven't lived in Augusta all my life for nothing."

Mr. Miller looked at his wife.

"What do you say, Martha? Shall we let him go?" he asked.

"I think it our duty to do so, John. By letting him go we may be the means of saving the lives of many of the 'Liberty Boys,' and, besides, brother's folks may be saved a lot of trouble and worry."

"True; well, you may go, Sam—but be careful. Be very careful. Don't let the sentinels see you, and keep your eyes open for Tories while on your way to your uncle's house."

"I will, father."

After a few more words with his parents the boy shook hands with his father and younger brother, kissed his mother and little sister, and left the house by the rear door. He made his way to the stable, entered, bridled and saddled a horse, led the animal forth and into the back alley, then mounted and rode away.

Sam Miller told the truth when he said he had not lived in Augusta all his life for nothing, for he knew a way of getting out of the town without being seen by the British sentinels, and fifteen minutes later he was riding along the road at a gallop.

"I have nearly twice as far to go as the redcoats have," the boy said to himself, "but I'll beat them there or know the reason why!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" DEAL THE BRITISH A BLOW.

It was nine o'clock at night at the farmhouse of Hardy. The "Liberty Boys" were there and the major had gone upstairs to roll themselves in their blankets and stretch themselves out on the floor and go to sleep.

In the big sitting-room, however, in front of the cheerful fire in the huge fireplace were a dozen or more of youths, and among them were Dick Slater and Bob Esbrook. Mr. and Mrs. Hardy and Mabel were there and the events of the evening were being discussed and plans were being laid for the capture of Red Herrick, scourge.

Suddenly Dick started and turned his head in a listening attitude.

"Hark!" he said, "I thought I heard hoofbeats."

All listened, but no hoofbeats of horses could be heard; there presently came the sound of hurried footsteps without, however, and then a knock on the door, followed by the sound of a human voice.

"Open the door and let me in, quick! I have some important news for you!"

"That is Sam Miller's voice!" cried Mrs. Hardy, leaping to her feet and hastening to the door. "I wonder who brings him here so late?"

She opened the door and a boy of sixteen years leaped into the room.

"I have come to warn the 'Liberty Boys' that they are in great danger," he cried; "the British are coming to attack them!"

Dick and his comrades leaped to their feet.

"You say the British are coming, my boy?" cried Dick.

"Yes, yes; they are coming!"

"How many of them?"

"A hundred or more."

"Are they near here, now?"

"I don't know; but they cannot be very far distant, I think. They came the short road from Augusta, afoot, while I came the long road on horseback."

"And they are coming here to attack us?"

"Yes."

"Quick, Bob! Get the boys downstairs at once!" ordered Dick, and as Bob and several more of the youths rushed upstairs to do the youth's bidding, he turned again to the boy.

"How did they know we—the 'Liberty Boys'—were here?" he asked.

"A man—a Tory from this neighborhood—came to Augusta and brought the information."

"I wonder who it could have been?" exclaimed Mabel Hardy.

"It was a man called Red Herrick."

"The Georgia Giant!" exclaimed Dick.

"That demon!" exclaimed Mabel.

"He is a dangerous fellow, I tell you, Dick!" cried Mark Morrison.

"Yes, he is going to be an extremely hard man to handle, I see," the youth agreed; "but run out to the road and keep a lookout for the redcoats, Mark. If you see them coming let us know."

"All right," and the youth hastened out of the house.

"I am very much obliged to you for bringing us the warning of the coming of the redcoats, my boy," said Dick, taking the boy's hand and shaking it heartily.

"I am glad that I was able to do something for the 'Liberty Boys,' sir," was the reply; "I have heard of you, lots of times, and I am glad to be able to have it to say that I have seen you."

"His name is Sam Miller, Mr. Slater," said Mabel, throwing her arm around the boy's neck and kissing him; "and he is my cousin."

"I am glad to hear that such a brave, noble boy is your cousin, Miss Mabel," said Dick; "and I am not surprised at his being the boy he is when I know that he is your cousin."

"I guess you are just trying to flatter me, Mr. Slater," said the girl blushing.

"Not at all, Miss Mabel; I meant every word, and—but here are the boys, and we must get to work. Come, boys; out of doors, quick! There's work to do!"

The "Liberty Boys" hastened out of doors, Dick following, and as they advanced to the front yard fence Mark Morrison said:

"I think I hear them coming, Dick!"

"Come, then, boys!" the youth exclaimed, "we must hasten up the road as far as possible and ambush the red-coats. We want to get as far away from the house as we can, in order to keep from frightening Mrs. Hardy and Mabel."

The youths made their way up the road, and every few moments they paused to listen. When they were two hundred yards from the house they heard the sound of trampling feet, and also the hum of voices in conversation.

"I guess we had better secrete ourselves in the edge of

the timber, now, boys," said Dick; "they are close at hand." The youths obeyed, and then all looked to their weapons. They were old hands at this kind of business, and knew just what to do.

It was not a bright moonlight night by any means, but neither was it so very dark. It would be possible to see the redcoats when they came opposite, without much difficulty, and so this would make it possible to fire upon them with deadly effect.

Nearer and nearer sounded the footsteps, and the hum of the voices grew louder. Then dark forms appeared close at hand.

Dick waited till the force of British was almost even with his "Liberty Boys," and then gave the signal to fire.

Crash—roar!

It was a terrible volley, and one that did a great deal of damage. The British had not been expecting anything of the kind, and were unprepared for it. Red Herrick had informed them that the "Liberty Boys" were at the house of Mr. Hardy, and as that was still nearly a quarter of a mile distant, they had not been expecting to see or hear anything of the enemy.

Wild yells of surprise and dismay went up from those who had not been wounded, while shrieks and curses went up from the wounded. Captain Jones, who was really a brave officer, ordered his men to charge into the timber, but before they could obey there came another volley and fifteen or twenty of the men went down.

This was too much, and the redcoats fled at the top of their speed, leaving their dead and wounded lying where they had fallen.

The "Liberty Boys" proceeded to reload their muskets and pistols, and then awaited the return of the British.

The redcoats, however, were too wise to venture back in force. They realized that they were at a disadvantage, in that the "Liberty Boys" were in hiding, and were more familiar with the ground, and had, besides, struck the British a severe blow, thirty-five or forty being dead and wounded.

Captain Jones got his men stopped at a point a quarter of a mile up the road and held a council.

"What shall we do?" he asked of a young lieutenant who was with him.

"I hardly know what to say, captain," was the reply. "We have been struck a severe blow."

"Yes."

"We have lost two-score men."

"At least that many, I should say."

"Those 'Liberty Boys' are bad men to deal with."

"They certainly are."

"How do you suppose they learned that we were coming?"

"I don't know."

"They proberbly hed some senternels out," suggested Red Herrick, who was standing near.

"That is likely," agreed the captain; "or some one may have heard you say where we were bound for, back at Augusta, and come here and warned them."

"I don't think that."

"Such could have been the case."

"I don't think so; nobuddy could hev passed us, ye know."

"But there are other roads."

"On'y long, rounderabout wuns."

"Still, a man on horseback could have got there ahead of us and given warning."

"Waal, et hain't onposseble, uv course."

"Nor will it do any good to discuss the matter now; the mischief is done and it can't be helped."

"Thet's so."

"The question now is, what are we going to do?"

"Yes, that's the question," the lieutenant said.

"Le's slip aroun' through ther timber an' make an attack on ther 'Liberty Boys' from ther rear," suggested Red Herrick.

"We could not make a success of it, Red," said the captain.

"Ye think not?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Why?"

"For the reason that my men are not used to 'slipping' around. They could not make their way through the timber noiselessly as your red Indians are able to do, and the 'Liberty Boys' would know we were coming and have another unpleasant reception ready for us."

"That is just about the way it would turn out, I'm afraid," agreed the lieutenant.

Red Herrick did not say much, but he was terribly disappointed on account of the way matters had turned out. He had hoped the British would be successful in striking the "Liberty Boys" a severe blow. Had they done so he would henceforth have been reasonably safe in his old haunts; but now he felt that it was going to be dangerous for him to remain. Still, he was a stubborn fellow and he told himself that he would not leave until he was forced to do so.

"I'll make 'em er lot uv trubble afore ever I let 'em run me erway," he said to himself.

"I wonder if the scoundrelly rebels would let us come

back, under a flag of truce, and look after our dead and wounded?" the captain remarked.

"I don't know," the lieutenant replied; "we could find out by trying."

"And that is the only way we can find out."

"You are right."

"Well, we will make the attempt to do this."

"It will do no harm."

"No. Will you act for me, lieutenant?"

"Certainly."

"All right; go ahead."

The lieutenant lost no time, but hastened away, and when he was within fifty yards of the spot where his comrades lay he called out:

"Hello, there, 'Liberty Boys'!"

The youths were still in the same position, waiting, and Dick replied:

"Hello, yourself! What do you want?"

"I have come as a messenger from the commander of our force."

"Yes."

"He wants to know if you will permit his men to look after our dead and wounded, under a flag of truce?"

"Certainly we will," was the prompt reply.

"You won't fire on us?"

"Fire upon a flag of truce? I guess not!"

"And we may come at once?"

"At once."

"Very good; and thank you."

"You are welcome."

The lieutenant hastened back to where the force was, and made his report.

"It's all right," he said.

"They will let us come under a flag of truce and look after our dead and wounded, then?" from the captain.

"Yes."

"All right; rightabout, face, men; forward, march!"

The British turned and marched back down the road to where their dead and wounded comrades lay, and their first work was to minister to the needs of the wounded men; the dead could wait.

When the wounded had been made as comfortable as was possible, for the time being, the matter of burying the dead came up.

"How are we to dig the graves?" the captain exclaimed. "We have no spade."

"Here is one, sir," said a voice, and Dick Slater, who had sent to Mr. Hardy's house for the tool, appeared in the midst of the British and handed the captain the spade.

"Thank you," said the captain; then he handed the spade to one of his men and ordered that they take turns and work as rapidly as possible. Having given the order he turned to Dick.

"My name is Jones, and I am a captain," he said. "Will you favor me with your name, sir?"

"Certainly, Captain Jones; my name is Slater, Dick Slater, and I, too, am a captain—the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'

"Here is my hand, Captain Slater," said the British officer, heartily; "under a flag of truce we meet as friends, and I must say that I am glad to make the acquaintance of one who has made such a name for himself. I have heard many stories of you and your 'Liberty Boys,' Captain Slater."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; and I am one who admires bravery, even though it is shown by an enemy. I am fighting the people of America, true, but I do not hate them; indeed, I have no ill feeling toward them. It is simply my duty to fight them, as I am a soldier, and have been sent over here for that purpose."

"Well, that is a good way to feel about it," said Dick; "I confess it is the same with me. I have no personal feeling in the matter at all, as I know that the soldiers of the king are simply doing their duty in fighting for him."

"That is it, exactly."

The two stood there, talking in the most friendly and amicable manner imaginable, when suddenly there came an interruption. Dick felt himself seized from behind and his arms were pinioned to his sides as if by bars of steel, while a hoarse, triumphant voice cried in his ear:

"Now we've got ye, Dick Slater! I guess ye won't run me out uv ther country, jes' yit erwhile!"

It was the voice of Red Herrick.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PATRIOT FORCE APPEARS.

Dick recognized the voice on the instant.

"What do you mean by leaping upon me in this fashion?" he exclaimed, indignantly.

"I mean that yer time hez jes' erbout come, ye blamed rebel!" hissed the giant.

"Unhand me, you cowardly scoundrel!" cried Dick.

"Oh, no; I couldn't think uv doin' that!" with a chuckle.

"Captain Jones, are you going to permit this, under a flag of truce?" asked Dick, his voice calm but with a grimness in it that was extremely threatening.

"Certainly not!" was the prompt reply. "What do you mean, Red Herrick, by such actions? Release Captain Slater instantly!"

"Ye mean fur me ter let loose uv 'im?" in surprised tones.

"Yes, yes; let go instantly!"

"But he's ther head wun uv ther rebel gang, capt'in!" expostulated the giant.

"I am aware of that; but we are here under a flag of truce, and if I were villain enough to wish to take advantage of what you have done it would be the worst thing I could do, for the captain's men are close at hand, muskets in hand, and they could, and would riddle us with bullets before we could get away."

"Waal, I'll hev ter let 'im go, I guess, ef ye say so," was the sullen remark of the giant, and then he released Dick and stepped back.

The youth immediately stepped forward and faced the giant.

"I wish to tell you something, Mr. Red Herrick," said the "Liberty Boy," in a calm, even but extremely menacing tone; "I told you this evening that we would stay here and hunt you down, and I now repeat the statement. You are doomed; you are a crime-stained scoundrel, and the earth will be well rid of you when we have hanged you up to a tree."

"I guess that ye air more fur blowin' than fur ennythin' else," growled the giant.

"You will find, and soon at that, that I am not 'blowing' at all; but that I mean every word I say."

"I hain't erfeerd."

"Perhaps not; you haven't brains enough to be afraid. But you are doomed, just the same. You cannot escape us. You have had quite a career here, plundering, robbing and murdering, but your career is going to be checked."

"Bosh! Ye kain't skeer me."

"You will stay and take your chances of being captured and shot or hanged, then?"

"Yas; I hain't ergoin' ter be driv outer my own localerty by nobuddy."

"Very well; before forty-eight hours have passed your carcass will be adorning one of the trees in this locality."

"I'll bet ye et won't!"

"You will see!"

When the British had finished the work of burying their

dead, the matter of getting the wounded men to Augusta came up for consideration, and Dick said he thought it possible that a team and wagon might be procured from Mr. Hardy. The suggestion was acted upon and the team was secured, and the wounded men were placed in the wagon as carefully as was possible. This done, the British set out for Augusta, promising to send the wagon back in the morning.

When they were gone Dick placed sentinels out, and the rest of the force of "Liberty Boys" went back to the house and to bed.

The British did not reach Augusta till about half-past one o'clock in the morning, and so they did not make any more disturbance than they could possibly help when they got there. The wounded men were carried into their quarters and were made as comfortable as possible, and the rest turned in and went to sleep.

After breakfast next morning Captain Jones went to headquarters and reported the failure of the expedition.

The commandant was amazed and horrified.

"Why, that beats anything I ever heard of!" he exclaimed. "And you were ambushed and two-score of your number killed and wounded? Terrible!"

"It was bad, that is a fact," agreed the captain.

"They must have had warning that you were coming."

"It looks that way to me."

"It cannot be otherwise."

"But who could have carried the news?"

"Some rebel of this town who heard where you were going, and hastened on ahead and gave the 'Liberty Boys' warning."

"You think so?"

"I am positive of it."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Shall we make another attempt to strike them a blow?"

"I don't know; we have already lost forty men, you say?"

"Yes."

"Well, if we should meet with disaster a second time it would be bad."

"Yes, indeed."

"It would be especially bad, just at this time, with the rebel force under General Ashe coming to attack us."

"You are right; we will need all our men."

"Yes, indeed, and more besides. I don't feel like taking any more chances against the 'Liberty Boys.' What do you say?"

"Well, it is just as you say. If you wish us to do so I will make another attempt and will try to avoid being

taken by surprise; but, as you say, if it should result disastrously—which is not an impossibility—then it would be bad."

"Yes, so bad that I do not feel like taking the chances."

"It shall be as you wish it, sir."

"Then let the 'Liberty Boys' go, and turn your attention to strengthening the defenses of the town so that we will be enabled to offer the rebels a good fight when they put in an appearance."

"Very well, sir."

"By the way, where is that fellow, Red Herrick? Did he come back with you?"

"No, he remained behind."

"He did, eh?"

"Yes; and I pity him, too."

"Why so?"

"The 'Liberty Boys' have declared their intention of hunting him down and hanging him."

"They have?"

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"On account of the fact that he has done so much mean work among the patriot families of the neighborhood."

"What has he done?"

"Plundered, robbed and even murdered."

"Is that a fact?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess it is true, judging by the looks of him."

"You are right; he looks capable of doing almost anything, doesn't he?"

"Yes; and while he is a Tory, and as such is friendly to us, yet I cannot feel sorry to think of him as adorning a tree with his carcass."

"Nor I. I am a soldier, and my trade is killing people, but in open and honorable warfare. I do not approve of this thing of murdering and pillaging."

"No; there is much of it done—too much; but I do not approve of it, and Mr. Red Herrick will have to look out for himself."

"I suspect that his main reason for bringing us information of the presence of the 'Liberty Boys' was on account of the fact that they had said they were going to hunt him down, and he hoped we would strike them such a strong blow that they would not feel like bothering with him."

The captain left headquarters and returned to his own quarters. His first act was to send a man with the team which had been borrowed from Mr. Hardy.

Then he went to work overseeing the strengthening of

the defenses of Augusta, as he had been instructed to do by the commandant.

This work was kept up all that day and till noon of the next, and then when the men were on the point of going to work, after dinner, a scout came rushing into the town, and to headquarters, with the information that the rebels, in great force, were coming.

"How far away are they?" asked the commandant.

"Not more than a mile."

"How many are there, do you think?"

"I should judge there are two thousand."

"So many as that?"

"Yes."

The commandant called a hasty council of the officers, and after a lively conference it was decided that the best and safest course for them to pursue was to evacuate the town and retreat toward Savannah.

"We are not strong enough to offer the rebels battle," said the commandant; "we had better retreat and wait for a better opportunity."

So he gave the order, and as the patriot host was entering at one side of the town the British were leaving at the other side.

The patriot army set out in pursuit, but as the soldiers were wearied by long marching, they could not catch up with the British, who were fresh.

The pursuit continued, however, until darkness set in, and then the patriots went into camp.

"We'll catch them to-morrow," said General Ashe.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF THE GEORGIA GIANT.

What of the "Liberty Boys" during the two days that have passed?

When Dick Slater told Red Herrick that the "Liberty Boys" were going to hunt him down and hang him, he meant it. He knew, from all that he had heard of the doings of the Georgia Giant, that he was a scourge indeed; that he was more of a detriment to the patriots of the vicinity than the entire British force at Augusta, and the youth was determined to put a stop to the fellow's reign of terror, and make it possible for the people of the neighborhood to breathe freely once more.

To this end, when morning came after the encounter with the redcoats under Captain Jones, Dick began the

work of running Red Herrick to earth. He divided his force up into four parties and went to work systematically to run the fiend down and make an end of him.

The "Liberty Boys" were such skillful hands in searching, were so well versed in everything pertaining to woodcraft, that it made it easier for them to accomplish the work than it would have been for an equal number of men not so skilled. Even as it was, had not Red Herrick, in the confidence which he had in his ability to keep out of the youths' way, shown himself, in bravado, it is doubtful if the youths would have been able to get on his trail. But he showed himself and they got on his trail; and once on it they hung to it like bloodhounds.

Red Herrick led them a merry chase; he doubled and turned, and went in circles, and he entered hiding place after hiding place, only to be hunted out each time and at last he began to realize that he had some men on his trail who were not like the farmers of the vicinity who had tried to run him to earth. They were youths thoroughly versed in woodcraft, and in all the tricks which a hunted man might be expected to play, and in anticipating these tricks the "Liberty Boys" came very near getting the giant on one or two occasions, and succeeded in giving him a good scare.

The giant was still at liberty when night came, but the youths were as determined as ever; and in order that their work of the day should not go for naught, Dick had the "Liberty Boys" string out for several miles in either direction, so that in case the fugitive tried to get back through the line and regain the haunts he had been driven out of he would, in all probability, be discovered and captured.

Red Herrick did make the attempt. He waited till eleven o'clock at night, and then crept stealthily through the timber. He was as careful as he could be, for he realized now that he was dealing with youths who were as smart as he in everything pertaining to woodcraft.

Onward, slowly he crept. His moccasined feet made scarcely any noise at all, but his course led him close to where a "Liberty Boy" lay, with ears close to the ground, and the youth heard the slight rustling of the leaves and knew what it meant.

The youth quietly drew his pistol and fired in the direction from which the sound proceeded, and the shot was followed by a horrible yell of rage and pain, and then a crackling amidst the underbrush.

Red Herrick had been wounded and was getting away from the vicinity as rapidly as he could. He went back in the direction from which he had just come, too, as he real-

ized that it would be useless to try to get through the line in safety.

"You wounded the scoundrel, I guess!" called out one of the youths who was near the one who fired the shot.

"Yes, but not seriously, I judge," was the reply.

"No, he went away too briskly to be badly wounded."

"So he did."

"Well, I guess he won't try to get through the line again, to-night."

"I hardly think so."

And so it turned out. Red Herrick made no further attempt to get through the line and the youths set out next morning and resumed the hunt for him where they had left off the evening before.

So thorough were they in their search that they had sighted him by ten o'clock, and during the rest of the time, before noon, they kept the giant on the jump. He had no time to rest, and while strong and hardy, he was so large and heavy that he was becoming very tired. The "Liberty Boys" were even more used to all kinds of exertion than the giant was, and they did not have so much weight to carry and did not tire so quickly; and it looked very much as if they would succeed in running the fiend down and capturing him as they had said they would do.

They stopped only a few minutes, at noon, to eat a bite of lunch, and then they set out again and were soon enabled to keep in sight of the fugitive all the time.

He had led them a merry chase and they were now about three miles west of Augusta. Red Herrick, finding that he was slowly but surely being overtaken, and that if he remained in the timber and hills he would inevitably be run down and captured, suddenly decided to make for Augusta.

"Ther scoundrels won't dar' ter foller me inter 'Gusta," he said to himself; "ther redcoats'll kill 'em ef they do."

He struck off toward the town at as fast a pace as he could go, and the youths, suspecting his purpose, hastened after him.

"If he succeeds in getting into Augusta we will lose him, boys," said Dick; "we must exert ourselves to the utmost and try to catch him before he reaches there."

"So we must," agreed all the youths, and they set out at as rapid a pace as they could go, and did their best to overtake the fugitive.

Red Herrick, however, felt that it was a race for life, and he exerted himself to the utmost, and gritting his teeth, maintained a gait that would take him into town ahead of his pursuers unless they could increase their speed.

This was hard to do, however; the youths, while tough

and strong, were not quite iron men, and they could not increase their speed sufficiently to enable them to overtake the giant before he reached Augusta. They paused at the edge of the town and saw him disappear down the street.

Bob Estabrook and Frank Ferris were for rushing right along after the scoundrel, but Dick would not hear to it.

"We hate to see that fiend escape, true," he said; "but at the same time we do not want to be hot-headed and foolish, and permit him to turn the tables on us by seeing some of our number captured."

"What are we to do, then?" asked Bob.

"We will have to retire and wait for another chance at the scoundrel, I guess."

"That is terrible!" complained Frank Ferris. "To think that we almost had him and then he escaped!"

"Hello! here comes some one!" exclaimed Mark Morrison.

"It's that boy that came out and warned us that the British were coming the other night!" said Sam Sander son.

"Yes, it's Sam Miller," said Dick; "well, he is a friend we know, so we might as well wait and see what he has to say."

"He looks excited, as if he was the bearer of some important news," said Bob, who was keen-eyed.

"You are right, Bob."

And so he was. The boy who was approaching at a run was indeed Sam Miller, Mabel Hardy's cousin, and he was the bearer of important news. As soon as he was close enough to make his words understood, he called out:

"Are you in pursuit of Red Herrick?"

"Yes," replied Dick.

"Then go right ahead; there is nothing to hinder."

"Nothing to hinder?" in surprise.

"No."

"But the British?"

"Have left Augusta."

"What!"

"The British have gone. They are not here!" The boy was close at hand now.

"Where have they gone?" asked Dick, who could hardly credit the statement, though he had reason to believe that the boy was truthful and reliable.

"They went down the river in a southeasterly direction."

"What made them take a notion to go?"

"The patriot army came and they were forced to take refuge in flight!"

The "Liberty Boys" understood it all, now, and gave a cheer.

"So that's it, eh?" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes."

"And is the patriot army in the town now?"

"No, the soldiers did not stop save long enough to get a drink of water and a bite to eat, and then they hastened onward in pursuit of the redcoats."

"Then we must hasten, fellows!" cried Dick. "We will enter the town and capture Red Herrick, if he remains here, and then we will follow the patriot force and help them run the redcoats down!"

"That's the talk!" cried Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, yes! This promises some lively work!" from Fred Ferris.

"Forward, march!" cried Dick. "On the double-quick!"

The youths set out and were soon making their way along the streets of the town. Sam was in front, with Dick, and led the way straight to the tavern which had been used as headquarters by the British commandant. As the youths approached the tavern the front door was suddenly dashed open and Red Herrick, the Georgia Giant, rushed forth.

"Surround the place! Don't let the scoundrel escape!" cried Dick, and the youths did as ordered, so quickly that the giant did not have time to get away and was forced to stand at bay, with his back to the side of the tavern. There he stood, with a great, knotty club in his hands, his eyes red and vicious, his hair tangled and standing on end. He looked like a veritable fiend as he stood at bay, and he did not belie his looks.

"Surrender!" cried Dick. "You cannot escape us. Surrender, or die!"

"I'll never surrender!" was the hoarse, angry reply. "I won't surrender, an' ef ye try ter lay han's on me et'll be ther worst thing ye ever tried ter do!"

"Keep your eyes on him, boys," ordered Dick; "keep our pistols leveled, too, and if he makes a move to try to escape, shoot him dead!"

"We'll do that, all right!" replied Frank Ferris, who was within a few feet of the giant.

Then Dick withdrew, going around to the front of the tavern, and here he motioned to Mark Morrison, and together they entered the tavern.

Without paying any attention to the men in the room the two "Liberty Boys" passed through and went upstairs, leaving a party of staring and amazed men behind.

They made their way along a hallway and then Dick opened a door and entered a room. Making his way to the window he raised it gently and leaned out and looked down. As he had figured, he was almost exactly above the head of the giant, Red Herrick.

This ascertained, Dick drew back and unwrapping a rope some fifteen or twenty feet in length from around his body he proceeded to make a noose in one end. The rope was made of horsehair and was small and pliable, and Dick rarely traveled without having it along.

Having got the noose made the youth again leaned out of the window and was just in time to see something that came very near bringing a cry of horror from his lips.

Fred Ferris, reckless and venturesome ever, had ventured too near the giant and the fiend made a quick stroke at him with the club. Fred saw the club coming, and ducked, but not quite low enough, and the end of the primitive but dangerous weapon struck him a glancing blow and knocked him to the ground, dazed and for the time being senseless, while cries of anger and horror escaped the lips of the youth's comrades.

Then the giant, club in hand, and a fierce look on his face, placed his foot on the form of the insensible "Liberty Boy" and growled out:

"Back, or I'll kill ther las' wun uv ye!"

Dick, from the window above, at once made ready to noose the fiend, for he did not know but the scoundrel might take it into his head to strike the unconscious youth another blow, which could not help being fatal.

The "Liberty Boys" saw Dick and understood what he intended trying to do, and they helped him along by attracting the attention of the giant.

"You scoundrel!" cried Sam Sanderson, shaking his pistol threateningly. "I have a good mind to blow the top of your head off!"

Several of the youths said the same thing, in different words, and they managed to keep the attention of Red Herrick attracted to them, thus giving Dick ample opportunity to work his scheme successfully—which he did do, for he suddenly dropped the noose over the head of the giant and gave a quick, powerful pull, drawing the rope taut around the fellow's neck.

"Quick, Mark! Lay hold and help me!" cried Dick, for he knew the giant would make a desperate fight.

Mark did as instructed, and the two, being strong youths, managed to lift the giant clear of the ground. In order to do this with more ease, they wrapped the rope around the post of a bed which stood near, and just at this instant the bartender and two more rough-looking characters leaped into the room and attacked Dick and Mark.

The youths were forced to let go of the rope, but it in some way became entangled and did not come loose from the bed-post, and Red Herrick was left dangling at the end of the rope, not three feet from the ground; but he

still retained hold of his terrible club, and kept striking out with it in every direction, with such force and fierceness that the "Liberty Boys" were forced to keep at a respectful distance, even had they wished to cut the rope and save the fiend's life—which they were not very eager to do.

As for Dick and Mark, although taken at a disadvantage on account of being taken by surprise, they quickly showed their assailants that they were dangerous youths to fool with.

Both were strong, agile and quick, and were, moreover, well skilled in the use of their fists, and the result was that they soon succeeded in flooring the three roughs with straight-from-the-shoulder blows.

Having got the advantage in this fashion, they easily kept it and knocked the men down as fast as they struggled to their feet. By the time each of the three had been floored two or three times, he had enough, and rather than be knocked down again, lay still and feigned unconsciousness. Indeed, one of the three did not have to feign, his head having struck the wall with such force as to knock him senseless.

The two youths then rushed to the window and looked out. The giant was hanging limp and lifeless at the end of the rope, while the "Liberty Boys" were looking first at the dead man and then up at the window. When they saw the youths, Bob called out:

"What's the matter? What have you been doing?"

"We have been having a little encounter with three men who rushed in and attacked us," replied Dick. "Is Red Herrick dead?"

"Yes, he's dead as a door-nail!" replied Bob. "We would have cut him down, but he kept thrashing around with his club till the very last, and we didn't dare venture near him."

"I guess the three scoundrels who attacked us are friends of Red Herrick," said Dick; "but instead of helping him they really caused his death, for they attacked us and we were forced to let go the rope, and it became entangled and held, and hanged the giant."

"Oh, well, it is all right," said Bob, with a grin; "Red Herrick met with exactly the fate that he deserved."

"I guess there is no doubt regarding that."

While Dick was talking to the "Liberty Boys" the three men had stolen out of the room and downstairs, glad to escape. They had thought that they would have an easy time getting the better of the two youths, but had learned their mistake and did not wish to try conclusions with them again.

The youths unfastened the rope from the bed-post and

let the end slip out of the window and then hastened downstairs and out of doors.

A great crowd had gathered, and while the majority of those present were loyalists, they did not have much to say. They were aware of the fact that there was a large patriot force in the vicinity, and then, too, they did not fancy the looks of the "Liberty Boys." They looked too much as if they would be dangerous if aroused. As far as the death of Red Herrick, the Georgia Giant, was concerned, those who knew him, even among the loyalists, were not very sorry for his demise, as he was such a desperado that there was no knowing when he might turn on friend as well as on foe.

Dick stepped to where the form of the giant lay, and stopping, made an examination to make sure that he was dead. There was no doubt regarding this, and the youth then stepped back into the barroom of the tavern, and, addressing the bartender, who was nursing a black eye, said:

"You and your two comrades who attacked myself and comrade upstairs a little while ago will have to look after the dead body of your friend, Red Herrick. Do you understand?"

"Yas, I understan'," was the growling reply.

"All right. It may be some pleasure to you to know that you are responsible for his death. Had you not attacked us, Red Herrick would have been alive yet."

"I don' berleeve et."

"It is the truth, just the same."

"How d'ye make that out?"

The youth explained, and the look of discomfiture that appeared on the fellow's face was ludicrous to see.

"So, you see, you made fools of yourselves by attacking us," said Dick.

"I guess we did," the bartender admitted; "we made fools uv ourselves an' got licked inter ther barg'in."

He and the two comrades who had been with him when the attack was made on Dick and Mark now came forth from the tavern, and lifting up the giant's body carried it into the house.

"Now, boys, the question is: What shall we do?" remarked Dick.

"Let's follow the patriot army," said Bob.

"That's what I say," said Frank Ferris; "we may get there in time to help them whip the redcoats."

The majority of the youths expressed themselves as being desirous of following the patriot army for the purpose of being on hand when the British were overtaken and helping thrash the enemy.

Very well; I am willing to go," said Dick; "but the question is: Shall we go afoot or return to Mr. Hardy's for our horses?"

After some discussion it was decided to return to Mr. Hardy's and get their horses. It was impossible to say how the British would succeed in getting before being overtaken, and while it would entail the loss of two or three hours' time to go after the horses, this could easily be made up by the greater speed at which it would be possible to travel.

Thus settled, they set out for the home of Mr. Hardy.

CHAPTER X.

THE PATRIOTS ROUTED.

"So you are back again!"

"Yes, Mr. Hardy."

"What success did you have?"

"The best in the world."

"And—Red Herrick?"

"Is dead."

"Is that really true?"

"It is."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" this from Mabel Hardy.

The "Liberty Boys" had just arrived at the Hardy home, and had been met at the front door by Mr. and Mrs. Hardy and Mabel, all three eager-faced and anxious-looking. When they heard Dick say that Red Herrick, the Georgia giant was dead, a look of relief passed over the faces of the three, and Mabel gave utterance to the exclamation, "Oh, I'm so glad!"

"Not that I am bloodthirsty or cruel-hearted," she hastened to add, "but because I think it will be the best thing in the world for all the people of this part of the country." "I think the same, Miss Mabel," said Dick, smiling.

"How did you succeed in catching him?" asked Mr. Hardy.

The youth explained, and when the three learned that the strong force of patriots had caused the British to evacuate Augusta and take refuge in flight, they were delighted. "I'm so glad!" said Mabel. "That is pretty nearly as good news as that Red Herrick is dead."

"You are right," agreed Mrs. Hardy; "I hope the patriots will overtake the British and give them a good thrashing."

"So do I!" from Mr. Hardy.

"And that reminds me that we must not be wasting our time here," said Dick. "We have come for our horses and are going to hasten on in pursuit of the patriot force so as to be present when the encounter takes place, if possible, and help thrash the redcoats."

"I hope you will get there in time," said Mr. Hardy.

"And so do we hope so!" exclaimed Fred Ferris. "Let's hurry, Dick."

The youths hastened to bridle and saddle their horses, and then, before mounting, they each and every one shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Hardy and Mabel, and bade them good-by.

"We may see you again, and soon, too," said Dick; "but it is not impossible that we may never see you again. I hope, however, that we may do so."

"And so do we," said Mr. Hardy; "for we owe you a great debt of gratitude for ridding us of that terrible scourge, Red Herrick."

"You owe us nothing for that," Dick hastened to say; "Red Herrick was a Tory, and as such it was our duty to hunt him down and rid the patriot settlers of him."

"We are grateful, just the same," said Mrs. Hardy, who felt that the "Liberty Boys," in ending the career of the giant, had practically saved her husband's life.

"Indeed we are!" Mr. Hardy exclaimed. "Ugh! I could not rest easy a moment if I knew Red Herrick was alive and in the neighborhood, and you young gentlemen were gone."

"Well, I am glad for your sake, Miss Mabel, that he is dead, as doubtless he would have tried to make you some trouble."

"I am sure he would have done so."

Mr. and Mrs. Hardy and Mabel told the "Liberty Boys" that if it should happen that they were in that vicinity at any time in the future they must come and see them and make their house their stopping place.

The youths promised that they would, and then, mounting, rode away.

They rode back to Augusta and then headed southeast and followed on the track of the British and patriots.

"We ought to catch up with them this evening, I should think," said Dick as they rode along.

"I should think so, Dick," replied Bob.

They did not overtake the patriot force that evening, however, and went into camp and spent the night resting up, for they were sleepy and tired, they having had but very little sleep for two nights past, they having been hot on the trail of Red Herrick during that time, and did not dare take much sleep.

Next morning they mounted and rode onward, but in riding well out in the open country, where it was easy for their horses to get along, the "Liberty Boys" lost track of the patriot army, and failed to overtake it.

"Well, we will find them to-morrow," said Dick; "we will be up and away early and will come up with them before noon, I am sure."

But again he was mistaken, for they had not come up with the patriot army by noon; but as they were getting ready to mount, after dinner, the sound of firing was heard in the distance.

"The patriots have overtaken the British!"

"The battle is on!"

"And we not there!"

"Jove! that is too bad!"

"Let's hurry; maybe we can get there in time!"

Such were a few of the exclamations, and the "Liberty Boys" hastened to mount and dash away in the direction from which came the sound of the firing.

Onward they dashed, and as they proceeded, the sound of the firing grew louder and louder. It was a long ways to where the battle was raging, however, and there were lots of obstacles to be overcome in reaching there, as there was no real road, and it was necessary to pick the way through the timber.

The youths dashed onward, regardless of obstacles and reckless of the dangers, and after an hour of this kind of work, they met a party of patriot soldiers fleeing back toward the north in utter confusion.

"What is the matter?" asked Dick, of one who was wounded, and who stopped when he met the horsemen.

"The British have routed our men," was the reply.

"Have routed the patriot army?" exclaimed Dick, in amazement.

"Yes."

"How did it happen?"

"They took us by surprise, as we were eating dinner, and had killed a large number before we knew what was happening."

"That is terrible!"

"So it is; but who are you men?"

"We are the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"The 'Liberty Boys'?"

"Yes; and we were hurrying to catch up with your force so as to be on hand to help whip the British when you caught up with them."

"Well, you're too late; the British have whipped us. Our men are scattered in every direction, and you had

better not venture any farther in the direction you have been going."

At this moment a man on horseback came riding up, and as he wore the Continental blue uniform of a general, Dick addressed him.

"Are you the commander of the patriot force, sir?" the youth asked.

"I am," was the reply. The man was pale, he having been wounded, and as he reined up his horse he looked anxiously back over his shoulder.

"Is it true, what this wounded soldier says, that the patriot army has been routed, sir?"

"It is, I am sorry to say; but who, if I may ask, are you?"

"I am Dick Slater, sir, and these are 'The Liberty Boys' of '76."

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Slater, and your 'Liberty Boys,' but am exceedingly sorry that it is under such sorrowful circumstances."

"And so are we sorry it is under such circumstances," said Dick. "Do you think there is no chance at all to bring your men to a stand and beat the redcoats back?"

"No, it could not be done; half my men are dead and the rest scattered in every direction."

"Then you are——"

"I am General Ashe."

"There come some of the scoundrels!" suddenly cried Bob. "Say, Dick, let us give them a surprise in the shape of a charge and a volley."

"All right. Forward, 'Liberty Boys'!"

The youths dashed forward, and when within fifty yards of the British, of whom there were perhaps a hundred, they fired a volley from their muskets and then whirled their horses and dashed back to where the general sat his horse.

The British seemed hardly to know what to think of this, and the force in question waited till others came up before venturing to advance.

"I think we had better retreat," said General Ashe. "that is most too strong a force for you to think of attacking them now."

The wounded soldier was lifted to a place in the saddle of one of the "Liberty Boys," the youth sitting behind the wounded man and holding him on; and then they retreated riding just fast enough to keep out of musket-shot distance.

As they rode along Dick conversed with the general and learned just how the affair had happened. The British had for once proven themselves shrewd, and had fooled the Americans completely. It was a terrible defeat, an

it, but it could not be helped; the patriots would have bear it as best they could.

"I am sorry we did not reach you in time to have taken part in the encounter," said Dick; "we might have strengthened you sufficiently to have enabled you to beat the British off."

The general shook his head.

"I don't think so," he said; "they surprised us and had beaten before we had fired a shot. If we had had twice many men as we did have we could not have won."

In company with the general the "Liberty Boys" crossed the Savannah River and headed in the direction of Charleston. As the youths had some work to do in the vicinity of Ninety-Six, however, they bade General Ashe ad-bye, later on, and headed more toward the north.

"I am sorry, of course, that we did not reach General Ashe's force in time to be with them when the British attacked them," said Dick that evening after they had gone to camp; "but I think that, on the whole, we could not have done better than we did do, for in ridding the patriots of Augusta of Red Herrick, the Georgia Giant and scourge, we did a splendid service to the cause." That is what I think," said Bob. "We did a mighty

good thing in running down Red Herrick and putting an end to his career. He was a standing threat and menace to the community."

Thus ends the story of "The 'Liberty Boys' and the Georgia Giant."

THE END.

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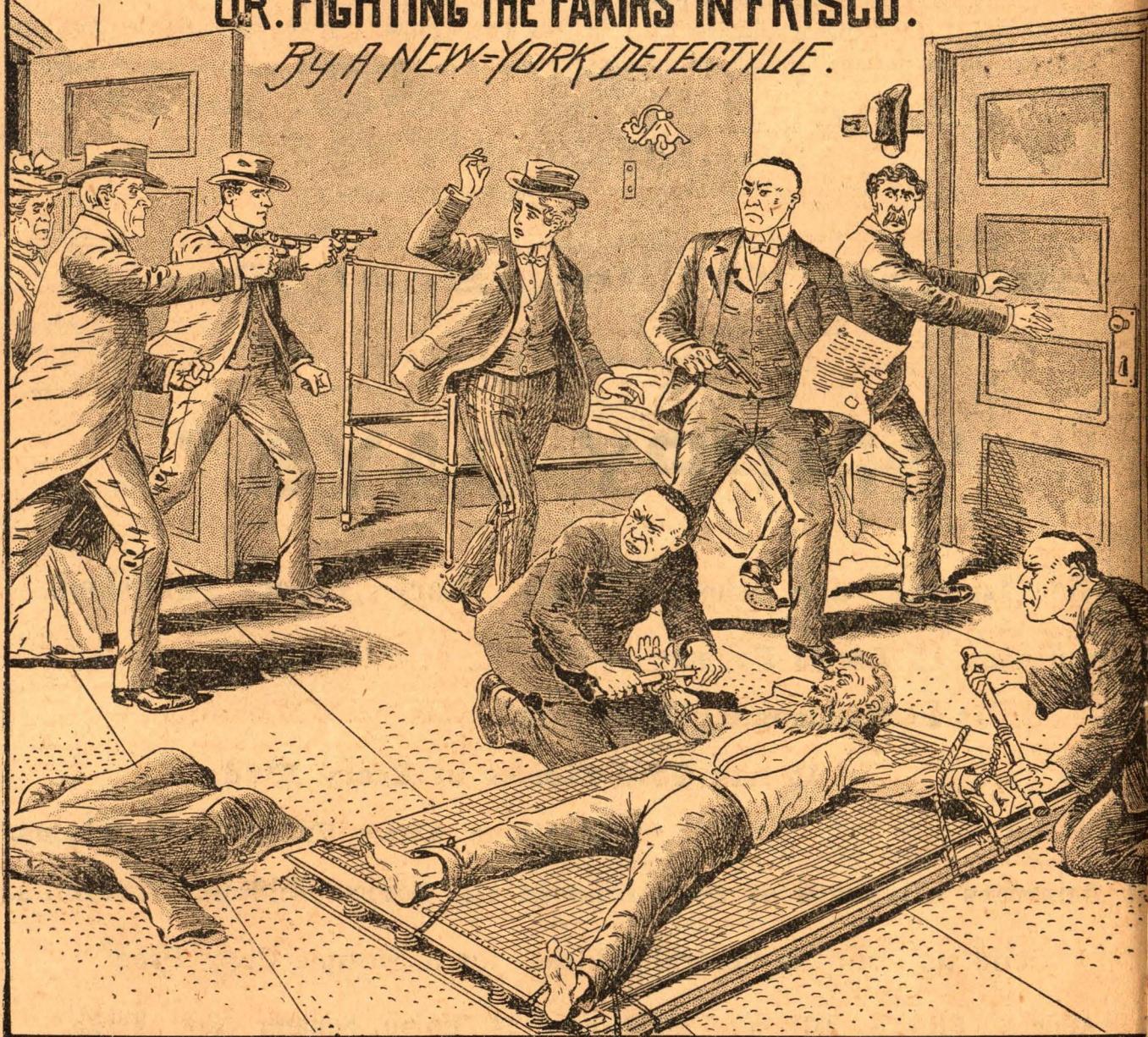
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